BASAVESHWARA

When the child Basava was born he did not cry or open his eyes for days. According to Sage Jataveda, who later became his guru, Basava had been in a yogic trance. Basaveshvara was a unique human being, a reformer way ahead of his times. Eight hundred years ago, at a time when society was ridden with the evils of a rigid caste system, he spoke of equality and believed in the emancipation of women.

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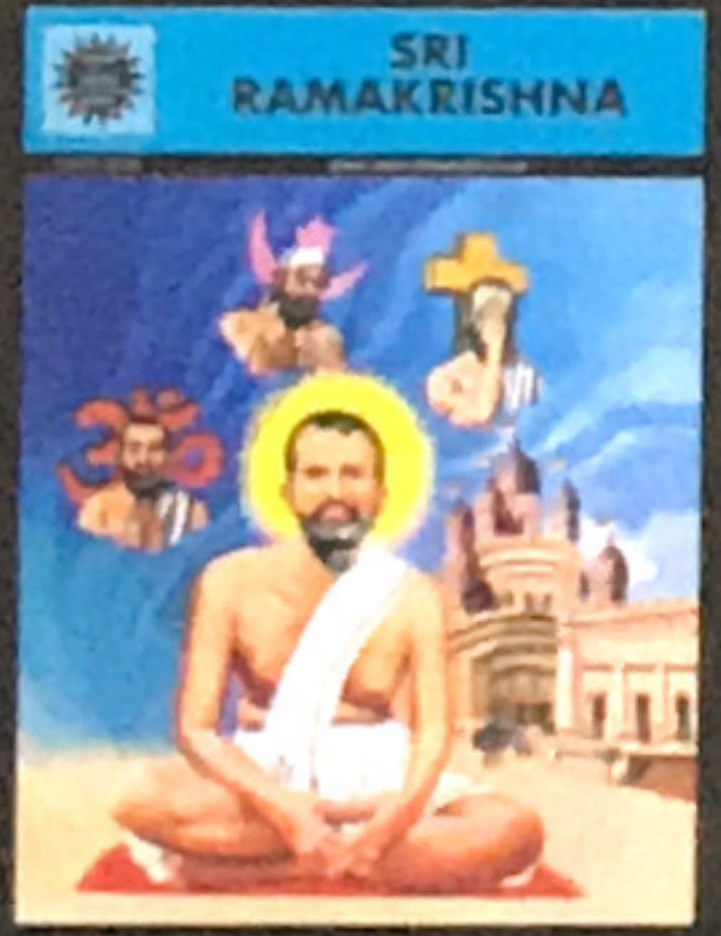
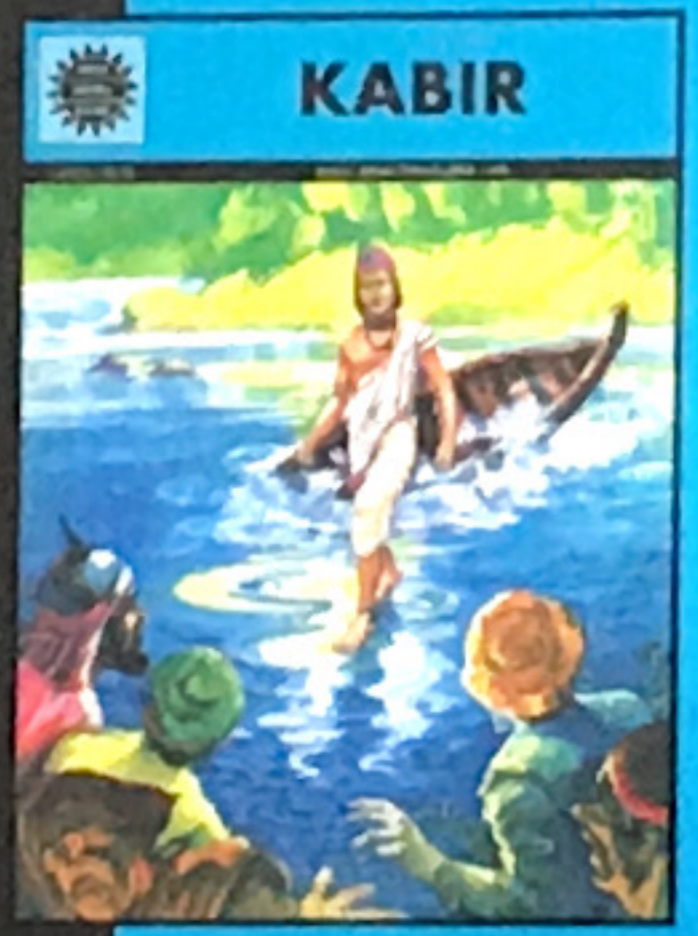


VIVEKANANDA

CHAITANYA MAHAPRABHU


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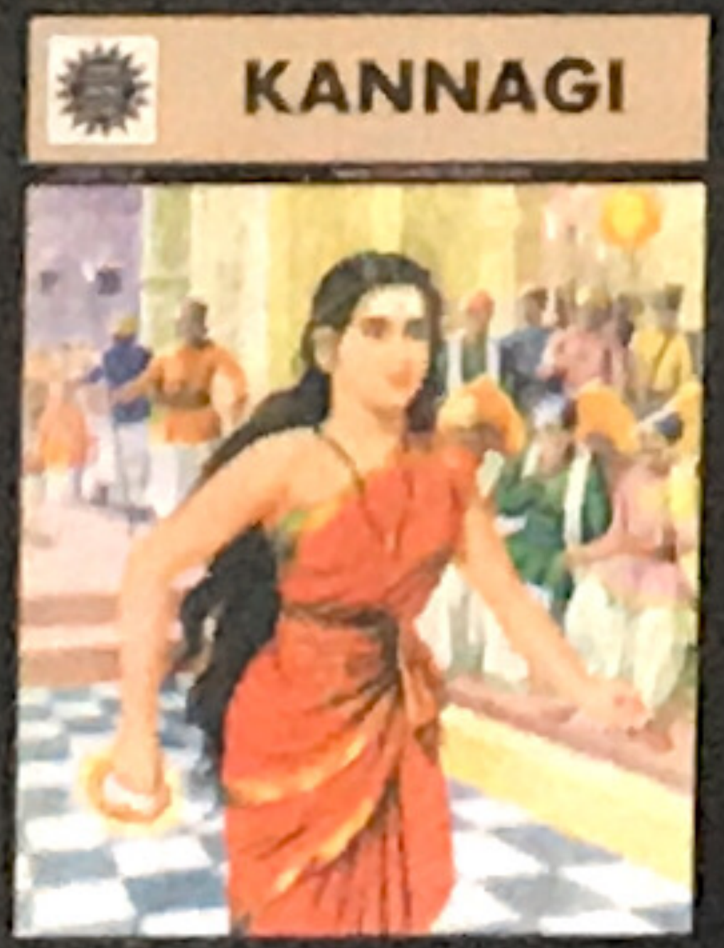

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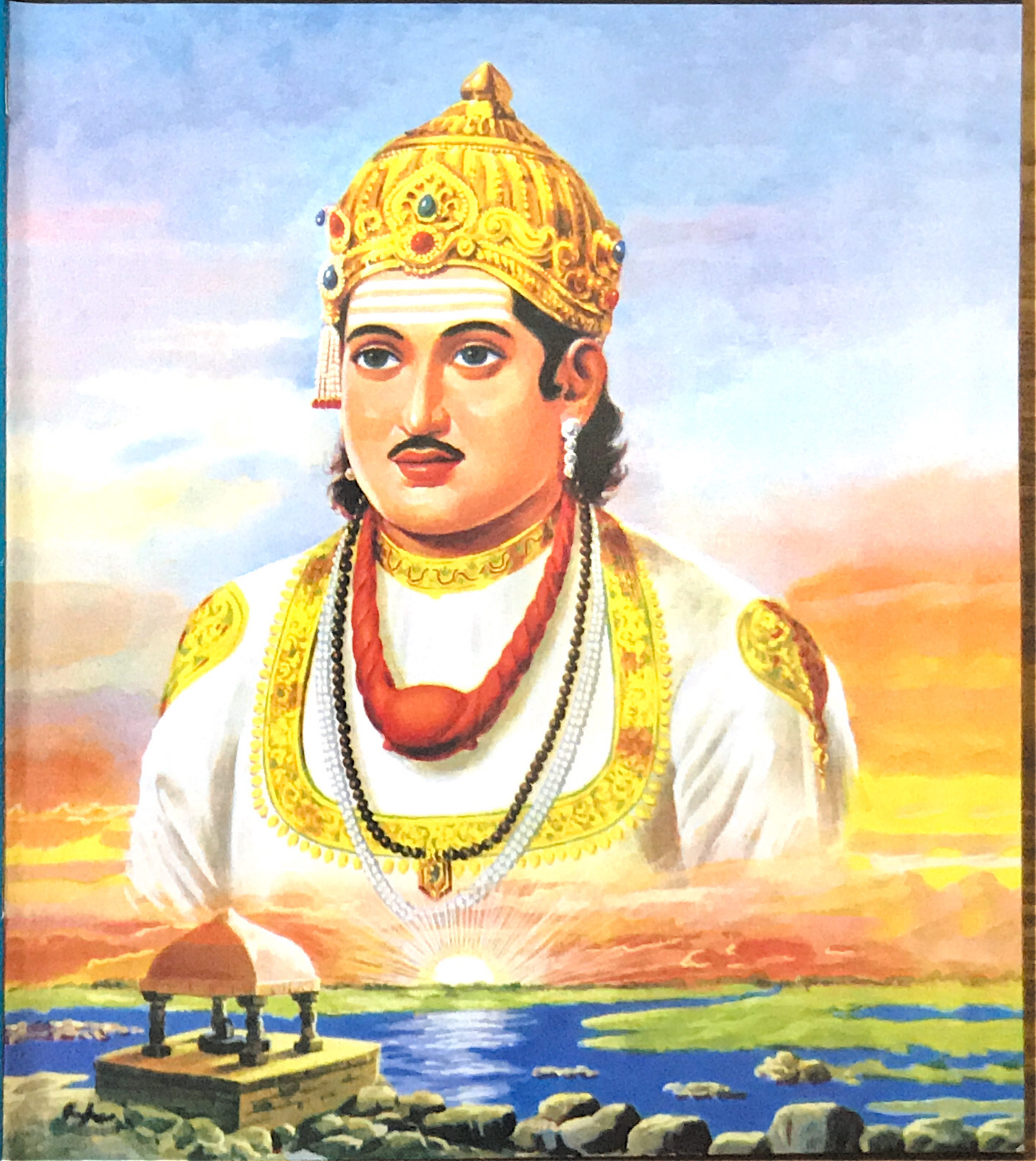
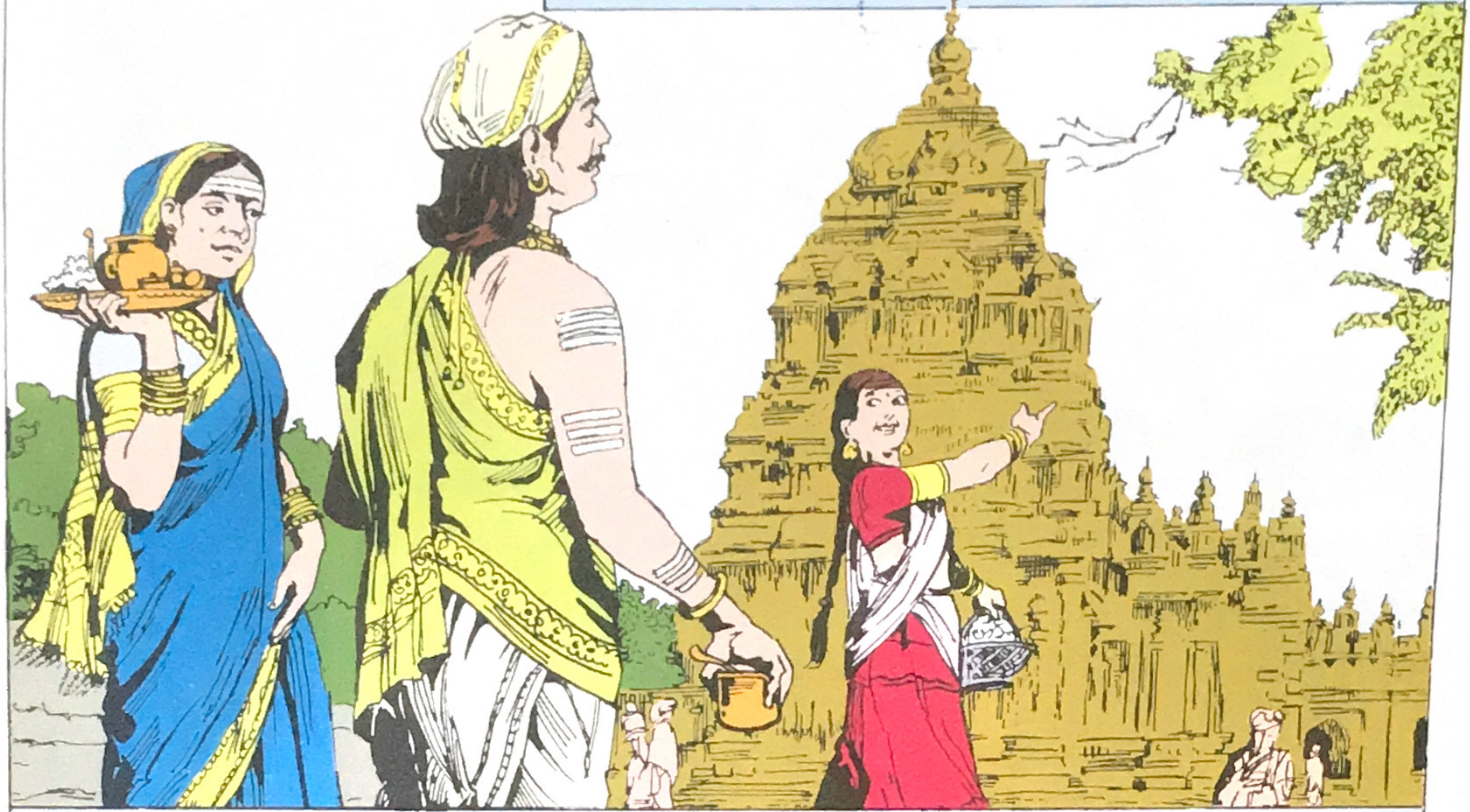
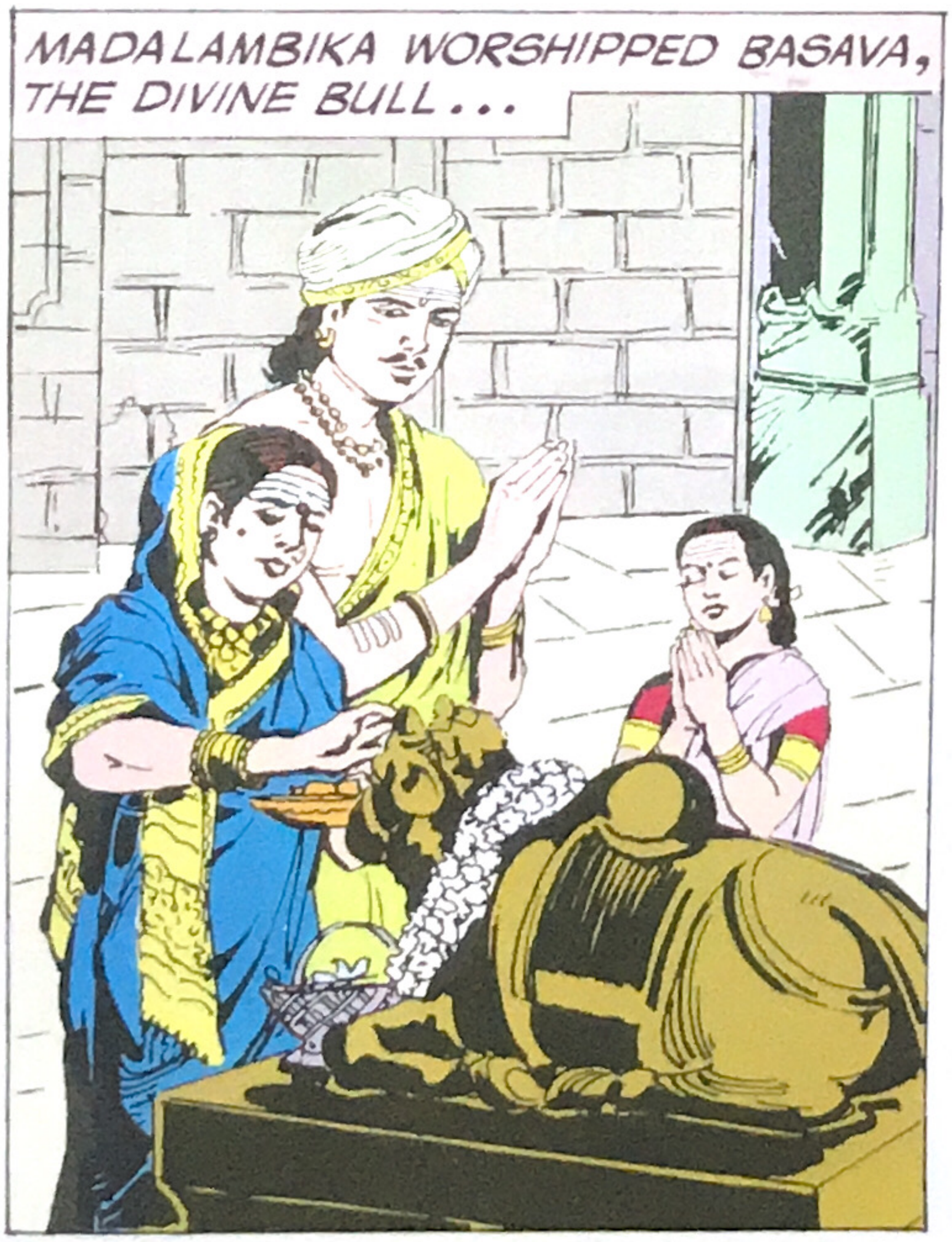


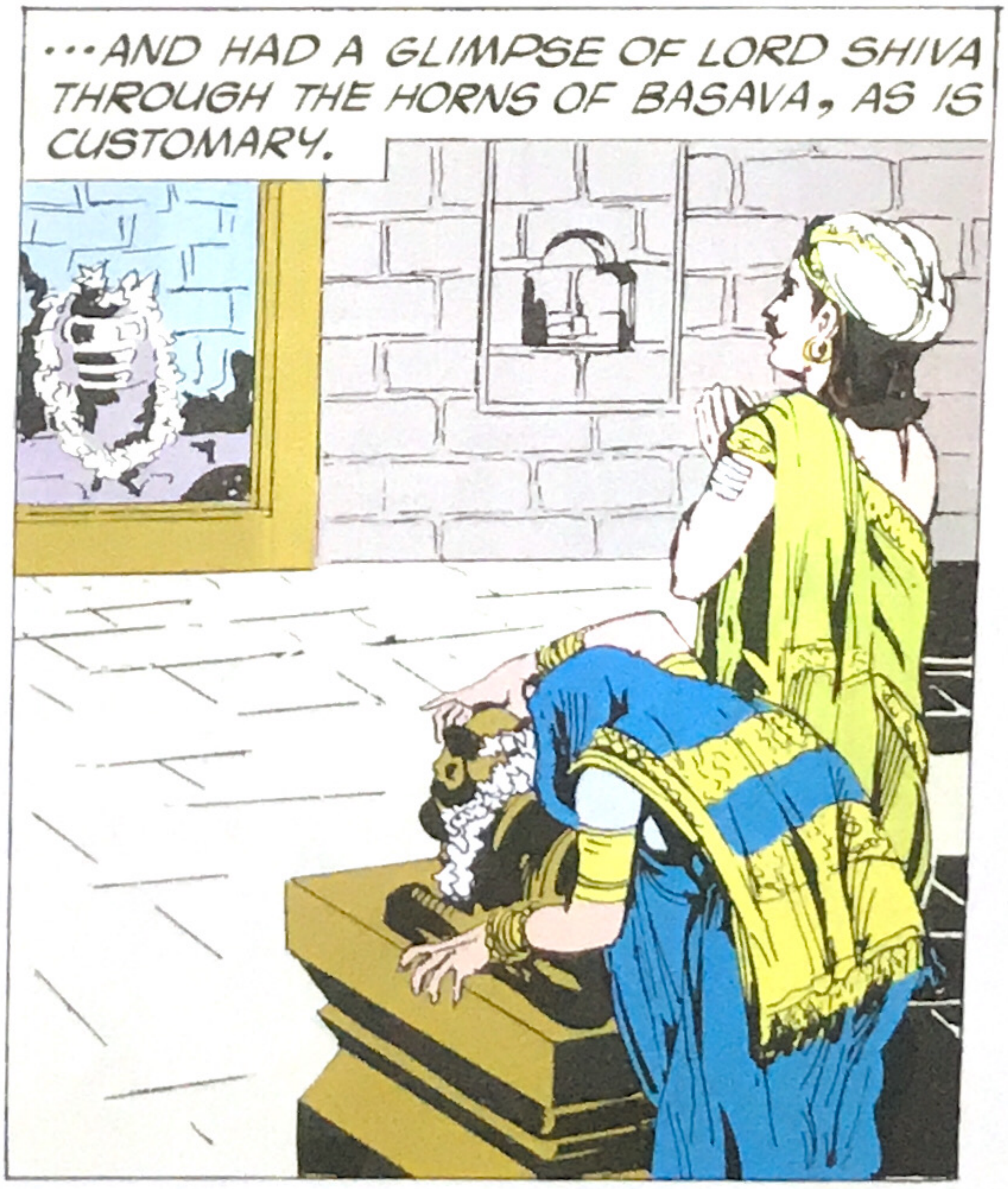
BASAVESHWARA



MADARASA AND MADALAMBIKA, A PIOUS BRAHMANA COUPLE OF BAGEWADI,* WERE REGULAR WORSHIPPERS AT THE TEMPLE OF LORD SHIVA. THEY HAD A DAUGHTER, NAGAMMA, BUT THEY WISHED TO HAVE A SON AS WELL.

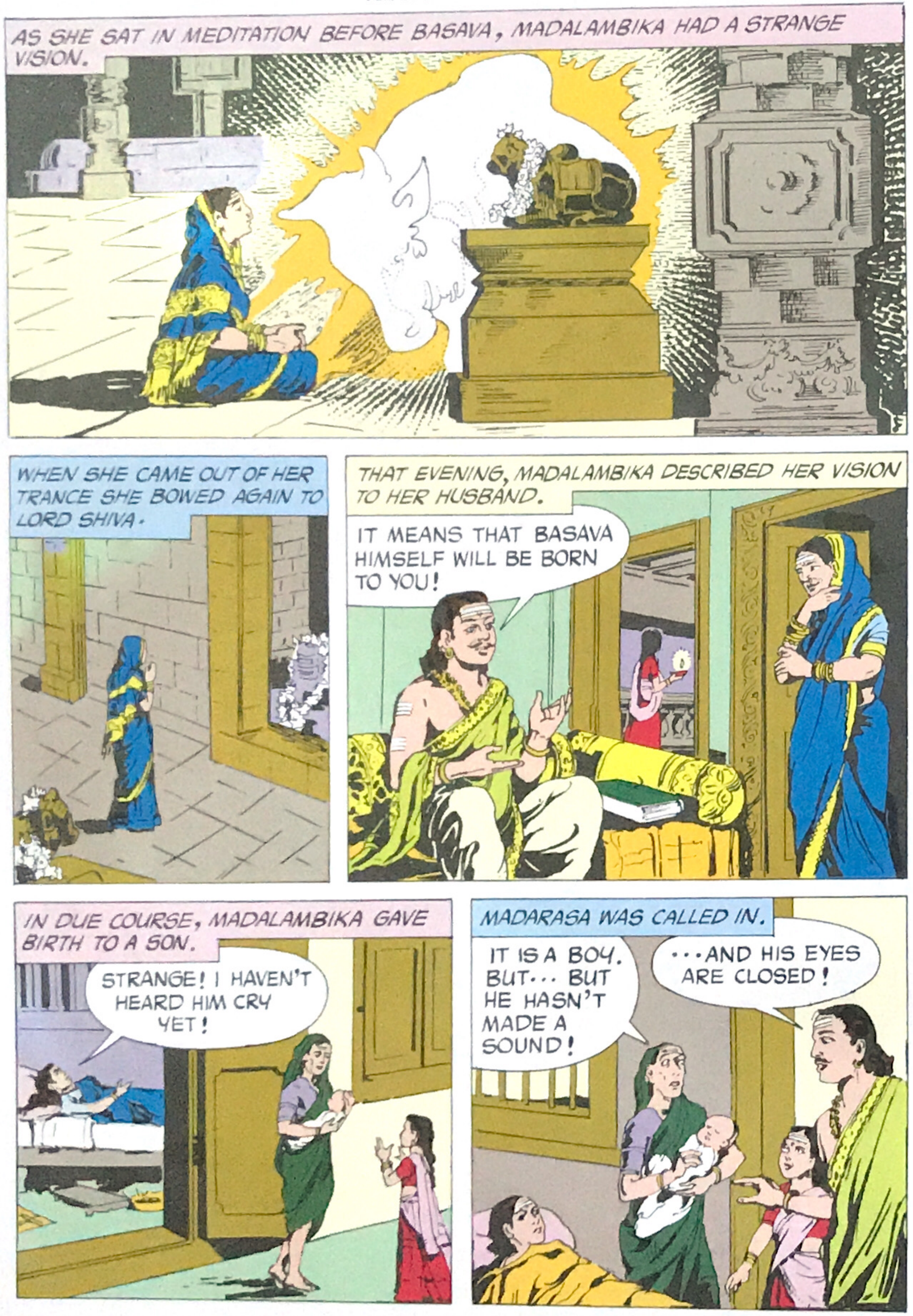


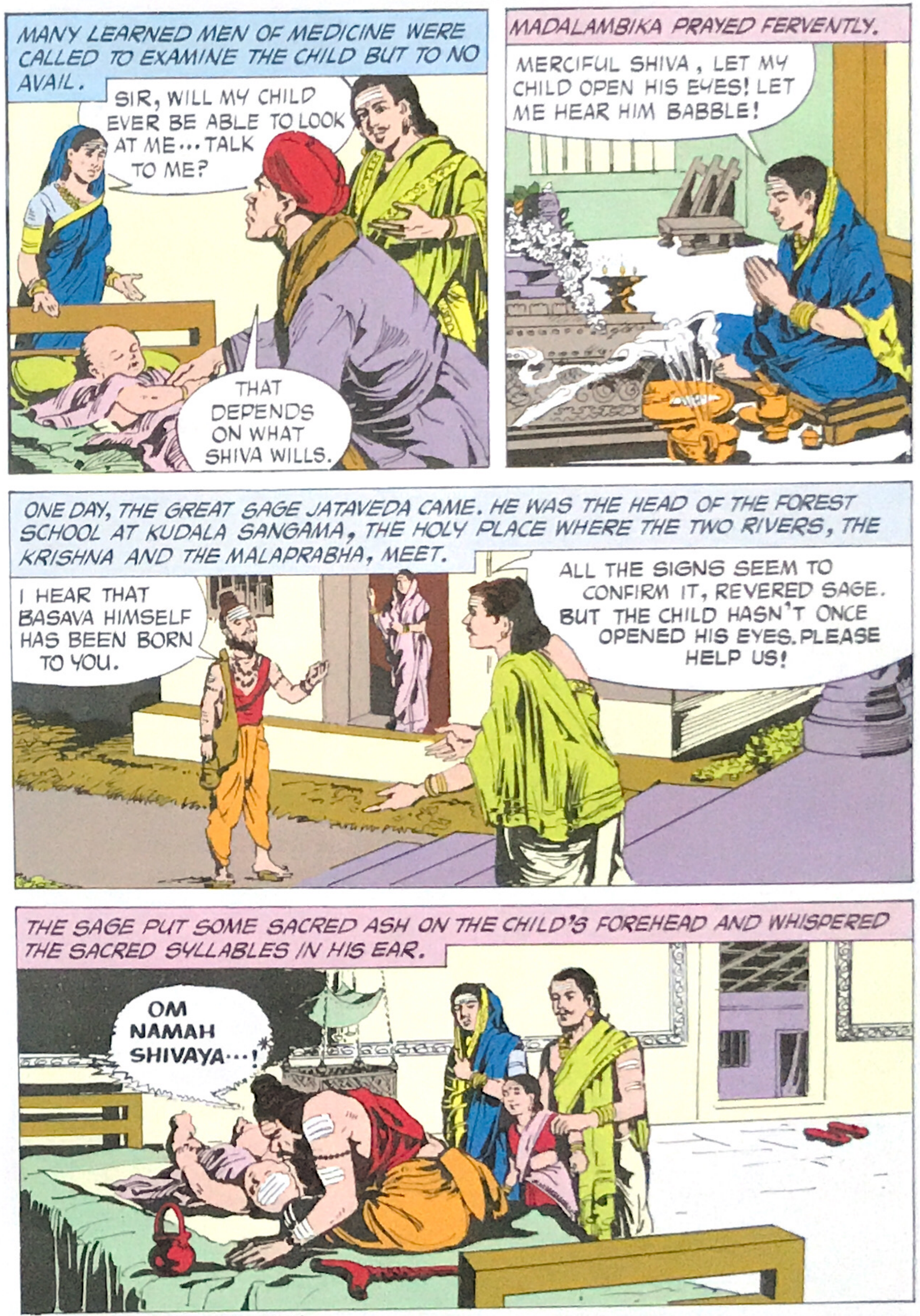
MADALAMBIKA WORSHIPPED BASAVA, THE DIVINE BULL ...



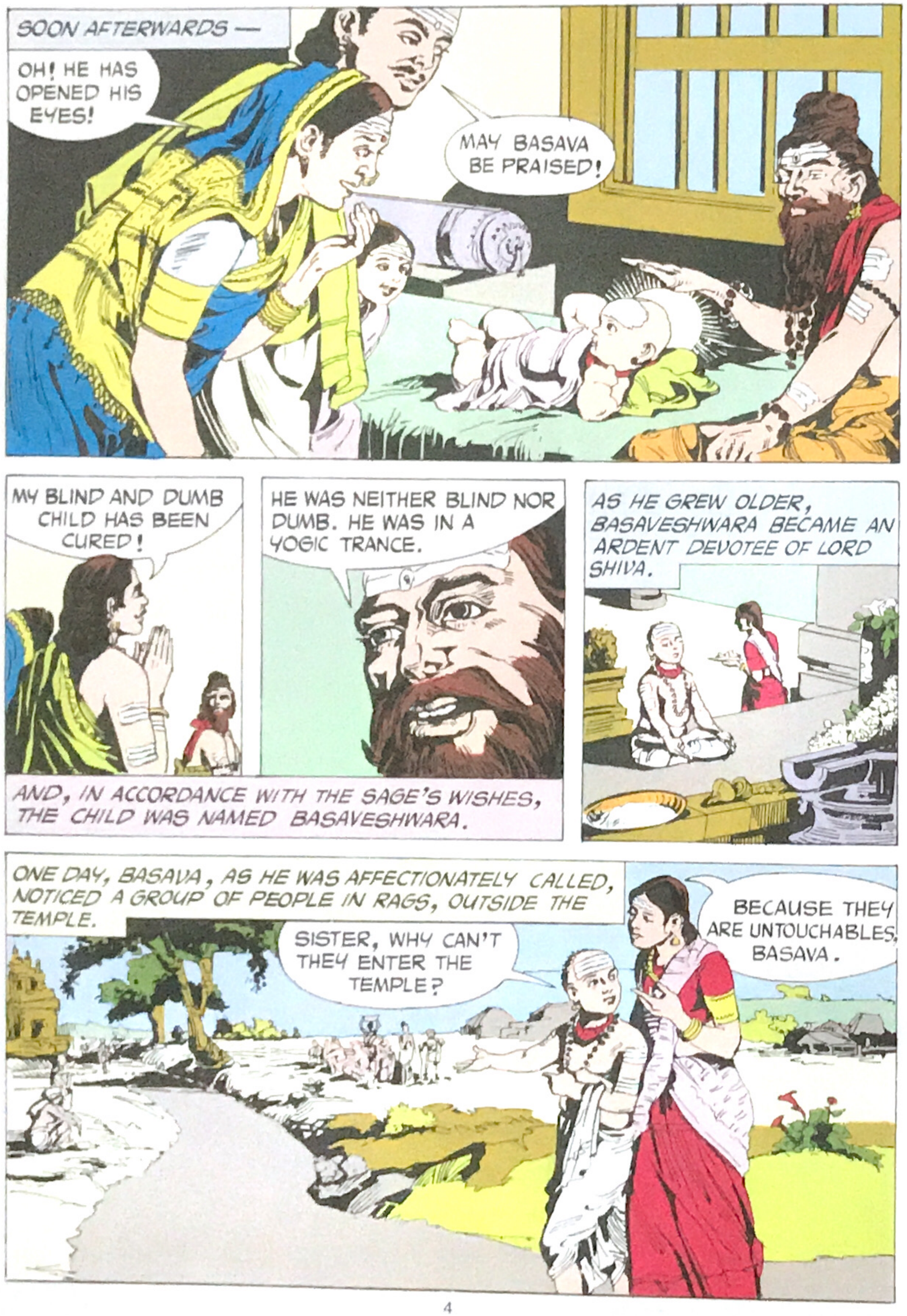
... AND HAD A GLIMPSE OF LORD SHIVA THROUGH THE HORNS OF BASAVA, AS IS CUSTOMARY.

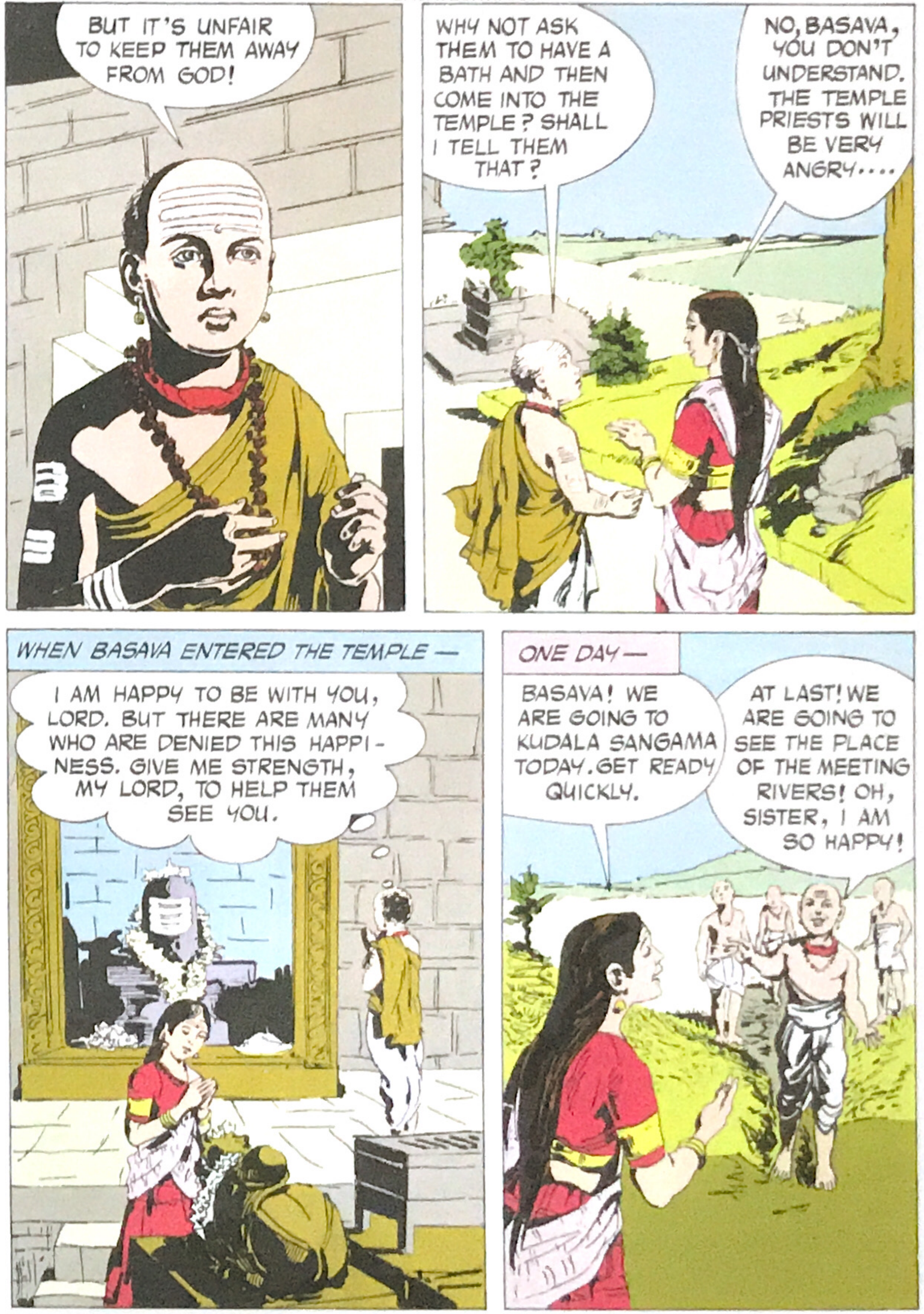
* IN BIJAPUR DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA


AS SHE SAT IN MEDITATION BEFORE BASAVA, MADALAMBIKA HAD A STRANGE VISION.
WHEN SHE CAME OUT OF HER TRANCE SHE BOWED AGAIN TO LORD SHIVA.
THAT EVENING, MADALAMBIKA DESCRIBED HER VISION TO HER HUSBAND.
IT MEANS THAT BASAVA HIMSELF WILL BE BORN TO YOU!
IN DUE COURSE, MADALAMBIKA GAVE BIRTH TO A SON.
STRANGE! I HAVEN'T HEARD HIM CRY YET!
MADARASA WAS CALLED IN.
IT IS A BOY. BUT... BUT HE HASN'T MADE A SOUND!
...AND HIS EYES ARE CLOSED!

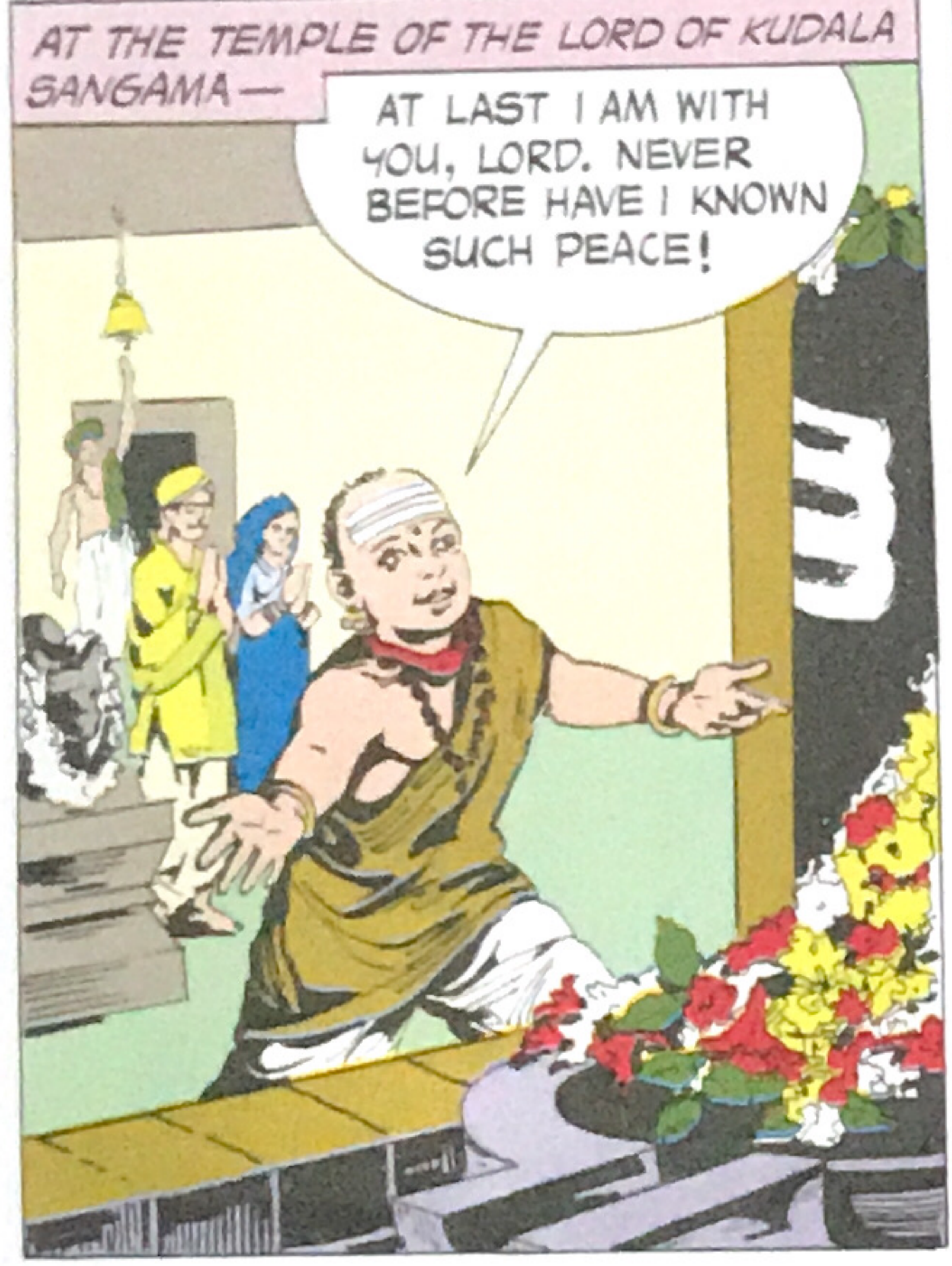

MANY LEARNED MEN OF MEDICINE WERE CALLED TO EXAMINE THE CHILD BUT TO NO AVAIL.
SIR, WILL MY CHILD EVER BE ABLE TO LOOK AT ME... TALK TO ME?
THAT DEPENDS ON WHAT SHIVA WILLS.
MADALAMBIKA PRAYED FERVENTLY.
MERCIFUL SHIVA, LET MY CHILD OPEN HIS EYES! LET ME HEAR HIM BABBLE!
ONE DAY, THE GREAT SAGE JATAVEDA CAME. HE WAS THE HEAD OF THE FOREST SCHOOL AT KUDALA SANGAMA, THE HOLY PLACE WHERE THE TWO RIVERS, THE KRISHNA AND THE MALAPRABHA, MEET.
I HEAR THAT BASAVA HIMSELF HAS BEEN BORN TO YOU.
ALL THE SIGNS SEEM TO CONFIRM IT, REVERED SAGE. BUT THE CHILD HASN'T ONCE OPENED HIS EYES. PLEASE HELP US!
THE SAGE PUT SOME SACRED ASH ON THE CHILD'S FOREHEAD AND WHISPERED THE SACRED SYLLABLES IN HIS EAR.
OM NAMAH SHIVAYA...!*

* SALUTATIONS TO SHIVA

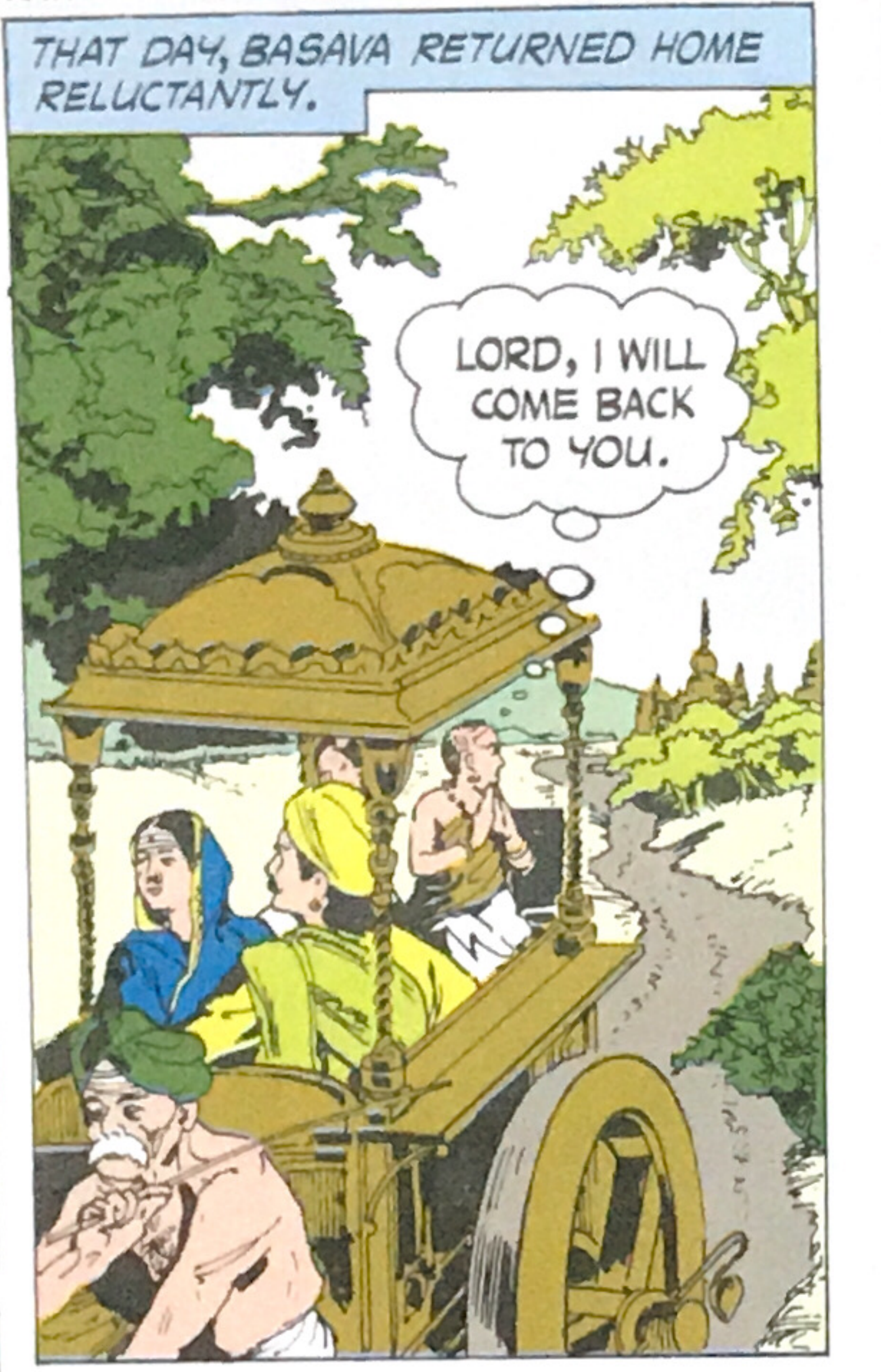

SOON AFTERWARDS —
OH! HE HAS OPENED HIS EYES!
MAY BASAVA BE PRAISED!
MY BLIND AND DUMB CHILD HAS BEEN CURED!
HE WAS NEITHER BLIND NOR DUMB. HE WAS IN A YOGIC TRANCE.
AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SAGE'S WISHES, THE CHILD WAS NAMED BASAVESHWARA.
AS HE GREW OLDER, BASAVESHWARA BECAME AN ARDENT DEVOTEE OF LORD SHIVA.
ONE DAY, BASAVA, AS HE WAS AFFECTIONATELY CALLED, NOTICED A GROUP OF PEOPLE IN RAGS, OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.
SISTER, WHY CAN'T THEY ENTER THE TEMPLE?
BECAUSE THEY ARE UNTOUCHABLES, BASAVA.


BUT IT'S UNFAIR TO KEEP THEM AWAY FROM GOD!
WHY NOT ASK THEM TO HAVE A BATH AND THEN COME INTO THE TEMPLE? SHALL I TELL THEM THAT?
NO, BASAVA, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. THE TEMPLE PRIESTS WILL BE VERY ANGRY....
WHEN BASAVA ENTERED THE TEMPLE —
I AM HAPPY TO BE WITH YOU, LORD. BUT THERE ARE MANY WHO ARE DENIED THIS HAPPINESS. GIVE ME STRENGTH, MY LORD, TO HELP THEM SEE YOU.
ONE DAY —
BASAVA! WE ARE GOING TO KUDALA SANGAMA TODAY. GET READY QUICKLY.
AT LAST! WE ARE GOING TO SEE THE PLACE OF THE MEETING RIVERS! OH, SISTER, I AM SO HAPPY!

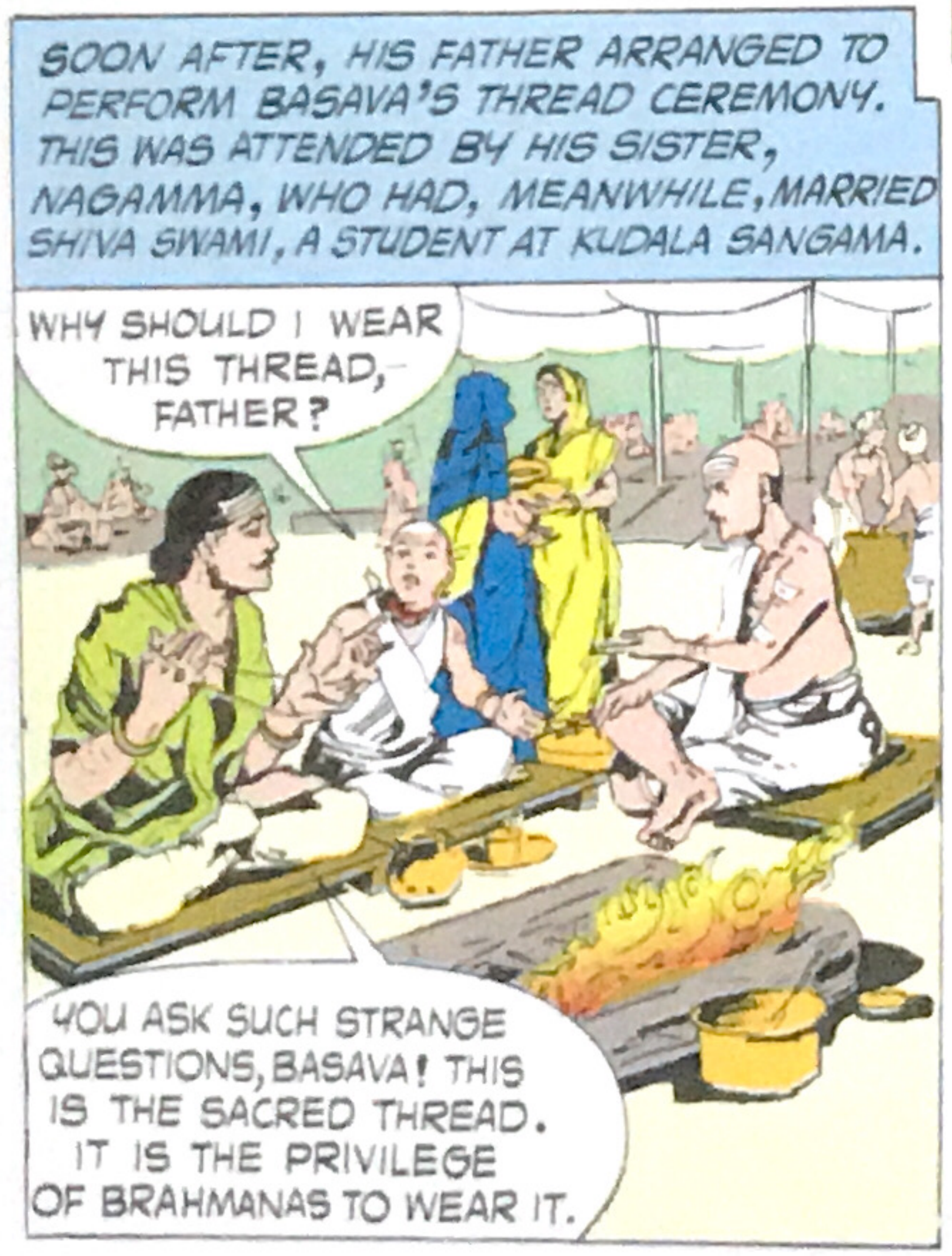
AT THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD OF KUDALA SANGAMA—

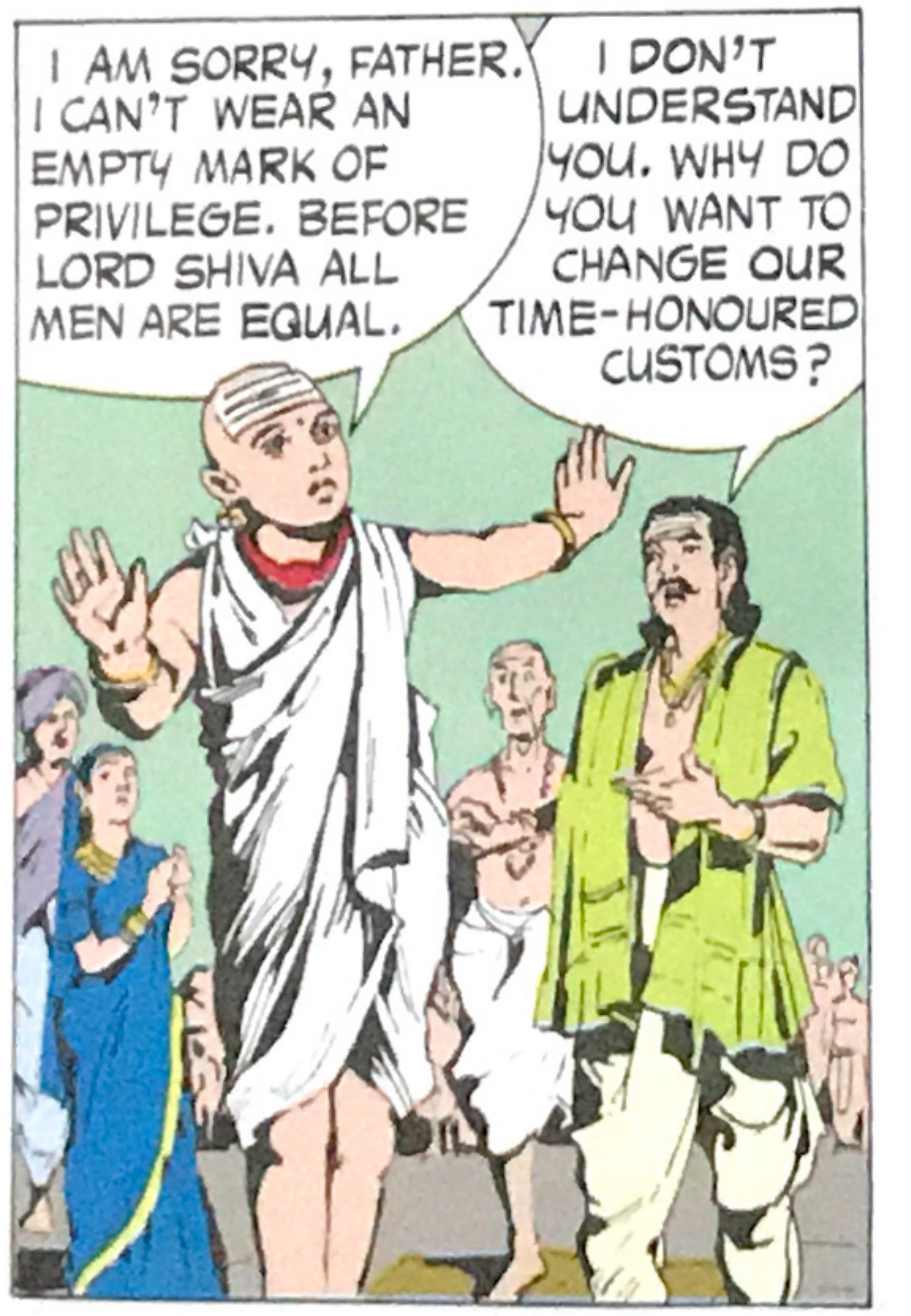

AT LAST I AM WITH YOU, LORD. NEVER BEFORE HAVE I KNOWN SUCH PEACE!

THAT DAY, BASAVA RETURNED HOME RELUCTANTLY.

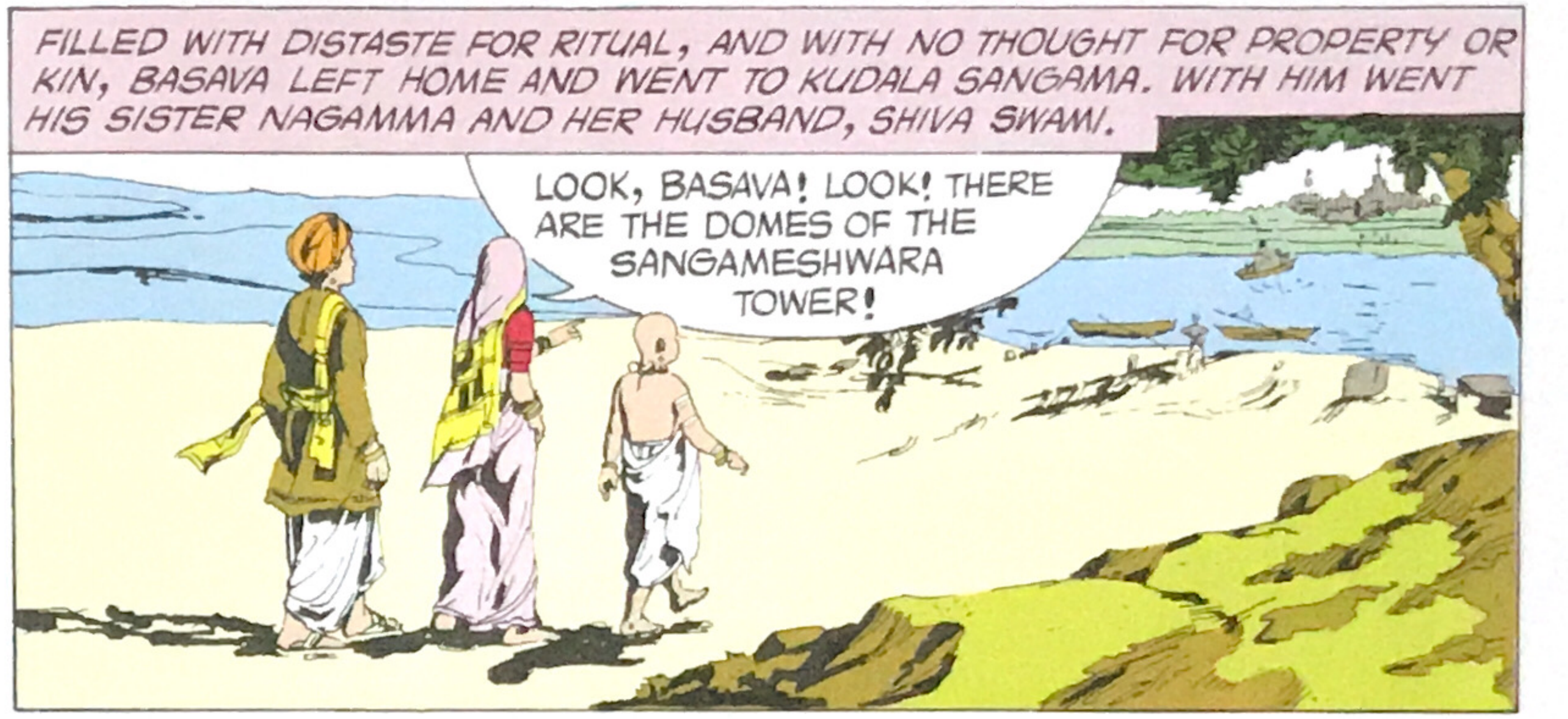

LORD, I WILL COME BACK TO YOU.

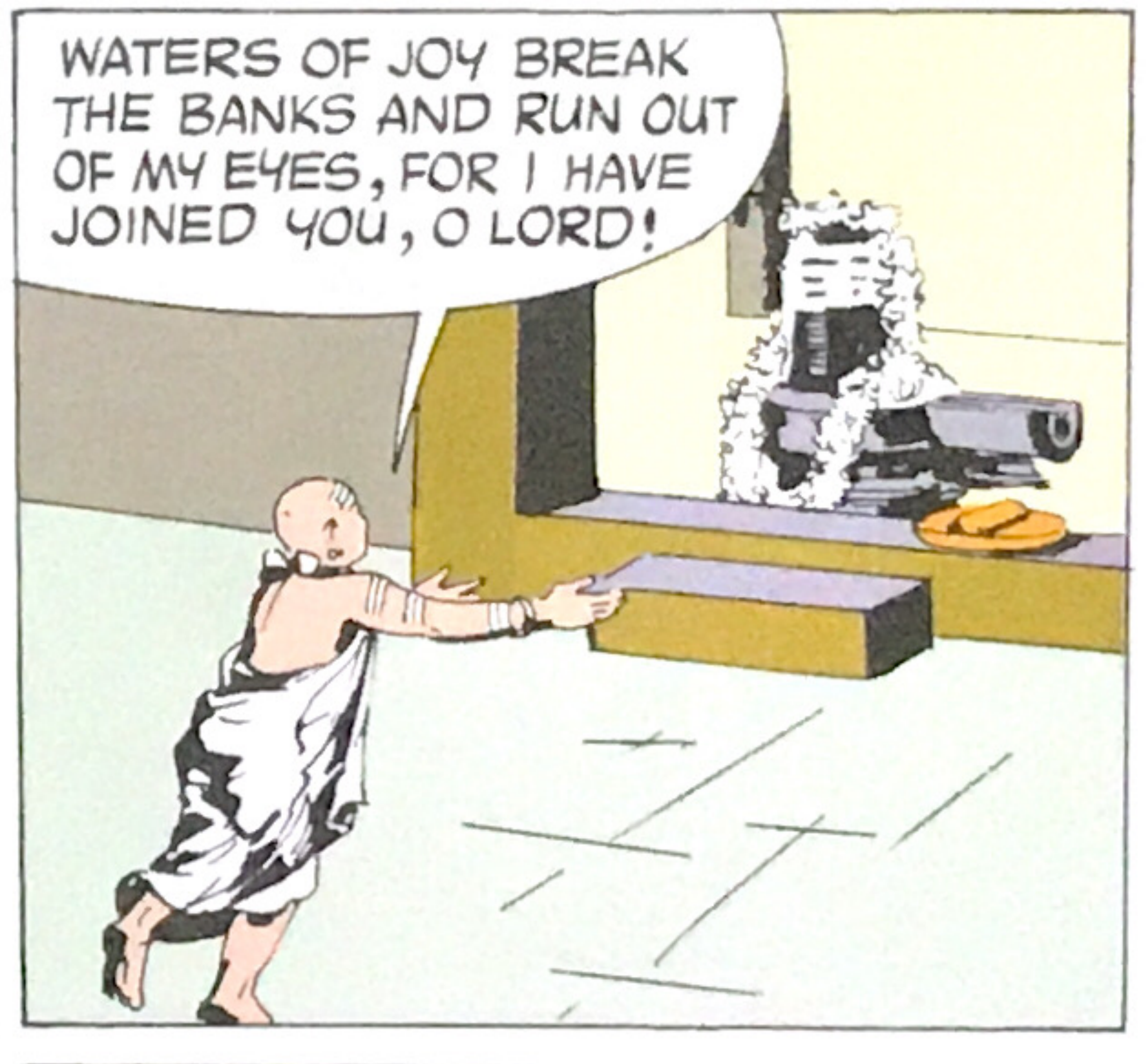
SOON AFTER, HIS FATHER ARRANGED TO PERFORM BASAVA'S THREAD CEREMONY. THIS WAS ATTENDED BY HIS SISTER, NAGAMMA, WHO HAD, MEANWHILE, MARRIED SHIVA SWAMI, A STUDENT AT KUDALA SANGAMA.


WHY SHOULD I WEAR THIS THREAD, FATHER?
YOU ASK SUCH STRANGE QUESTIONS, BASAVA! THIS IS THE SACRED THREAD. IT IS THE PRIVILEGE OF BRAHMANAS TO WEAR IT.

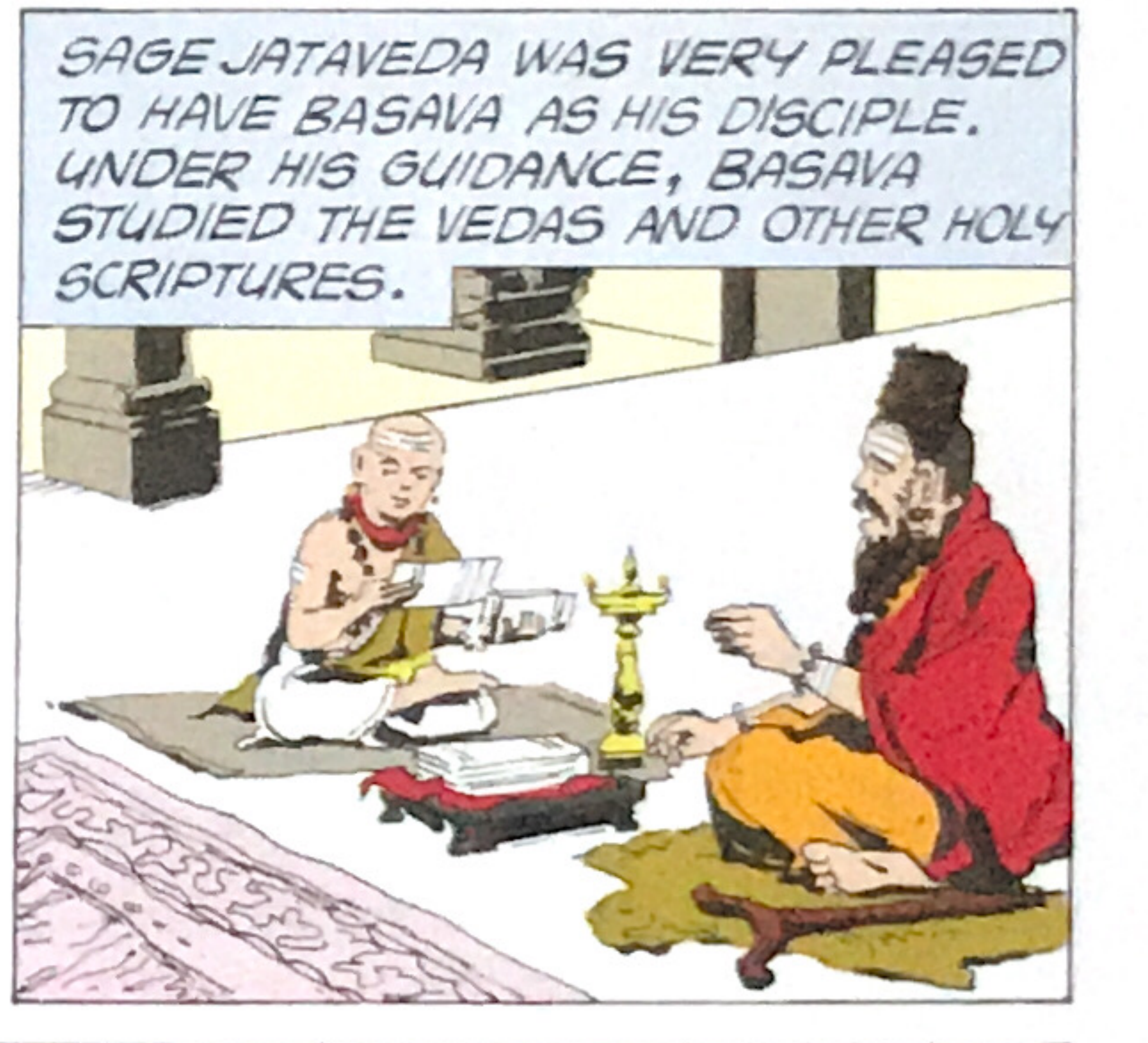

I AM SORRY, FATHER. I CAN'T WEAR AN EMPTY MARK OF PRIVILEGE. BEFORE LORD SHIVA ALL MEN ARE EQUAL.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU. WHY DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE OUR TIME-HONOURED CUSTOMS?

FILLED WITH DISTASTE FOR RITUAL, AND WITH NO THOUGHT FOR PROPERTY OR KIN, BASAVA LEFT HOME AND WENT TO KUDALA SANGAMA. WITH HIM WENT HIS SISTER NAGAMMA AND HER HUSBAND, SHIVA SWAMI.

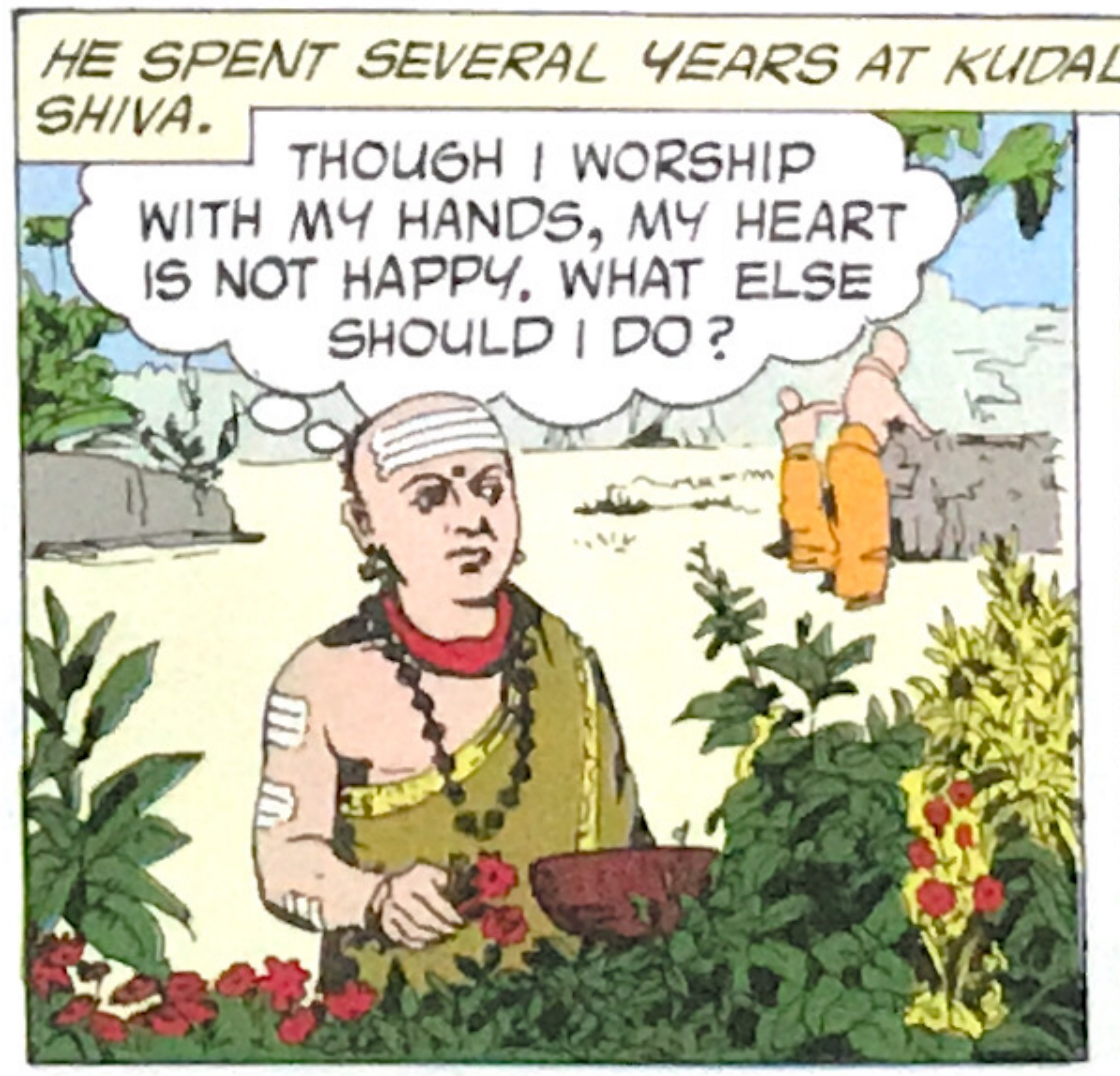

LOOK, BASAVA! LOOK! THERE ARE THE DOMES OF THE SANGAMESHWARA TOWER!

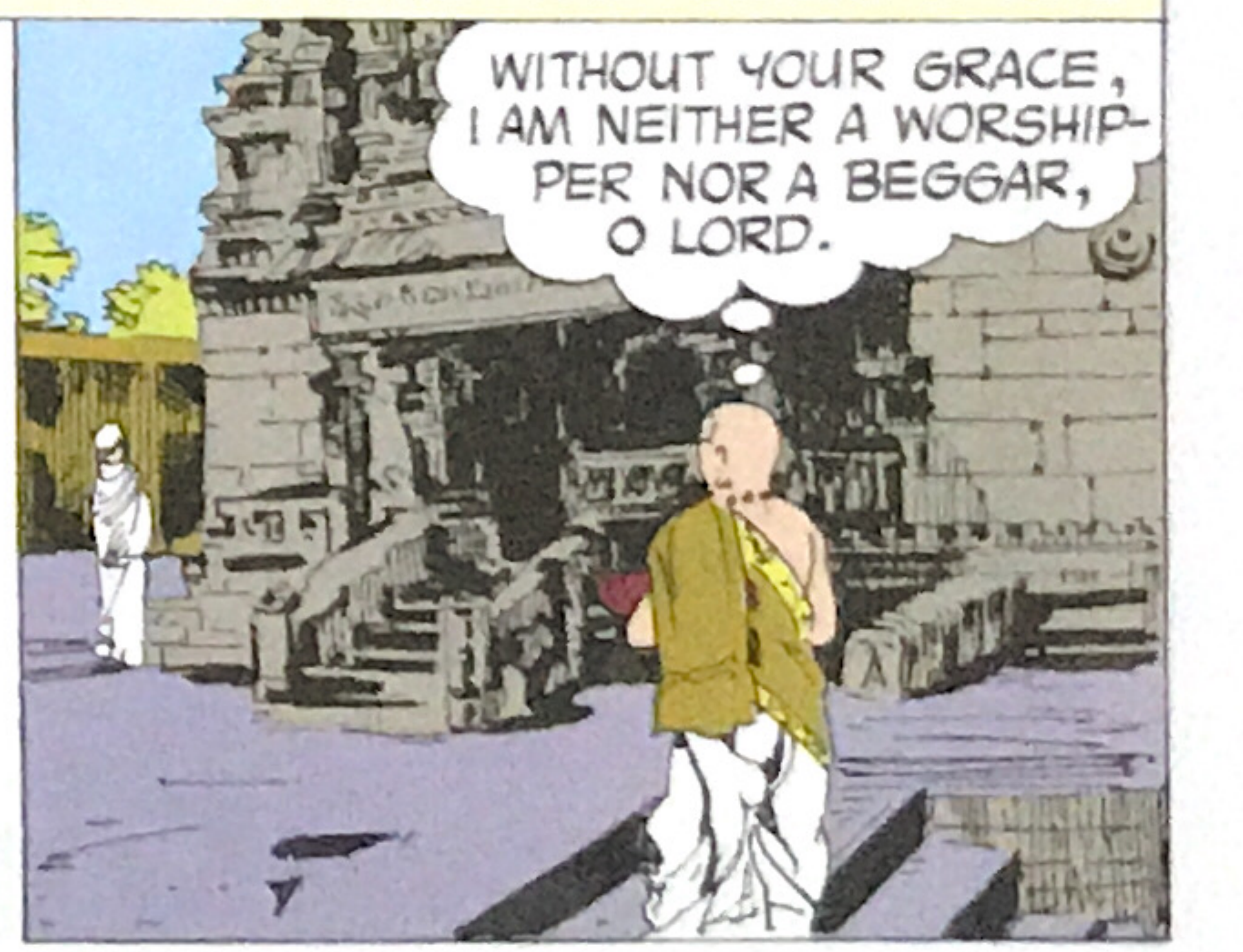

WATERS OF JOY BREAK THE BANKS AND RUN OUT OF MY EYES, FOR I HAVE JOINED YOU, O LORD!

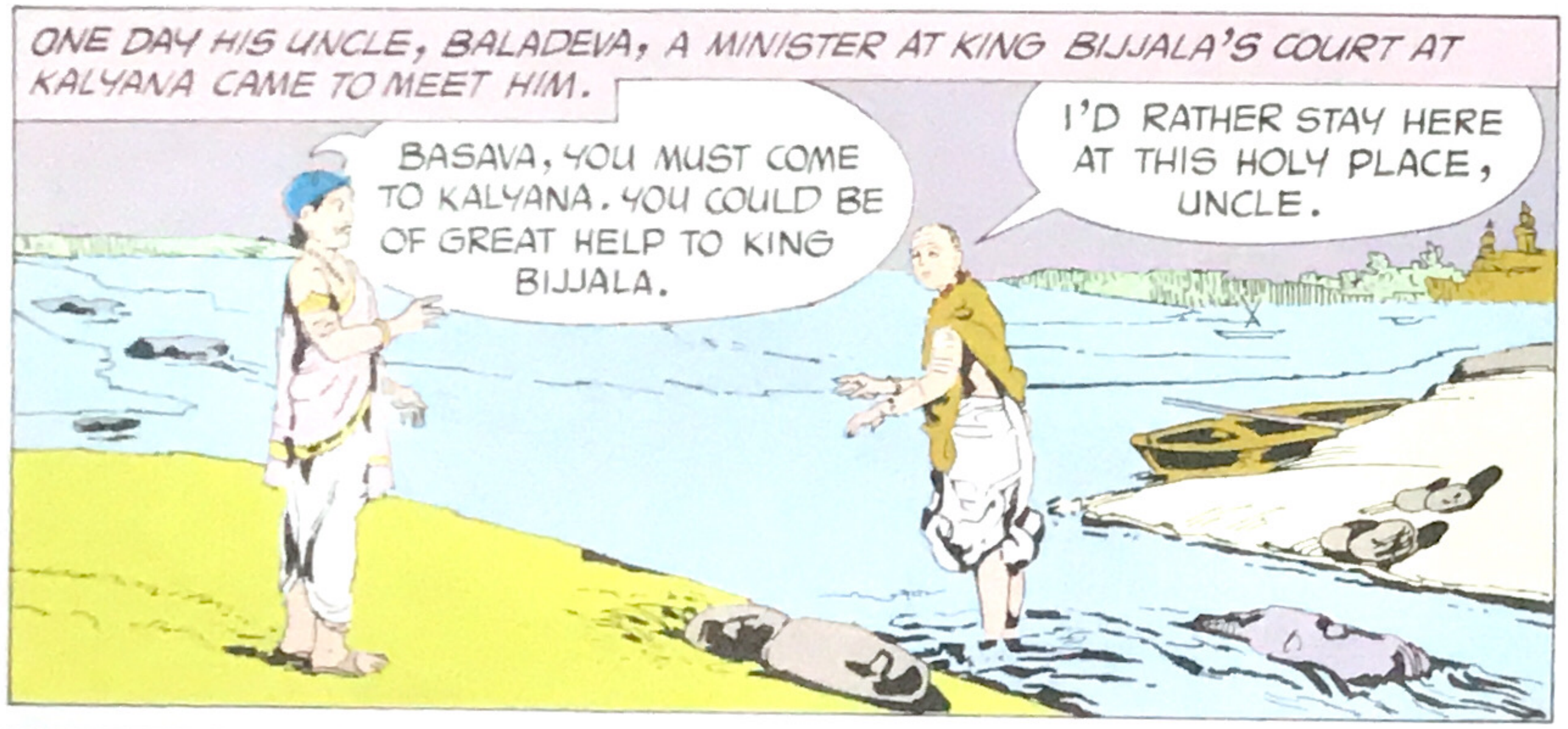
SAGE JATAVEDA WAS VERY PLEASED TO HAVE BASAVA AS HIS DISCIPLE. UNDER HIS GUIDANCE, BASAVA STUDIED THE VEDAS AND OTHER HOLY SCRIPTURES.

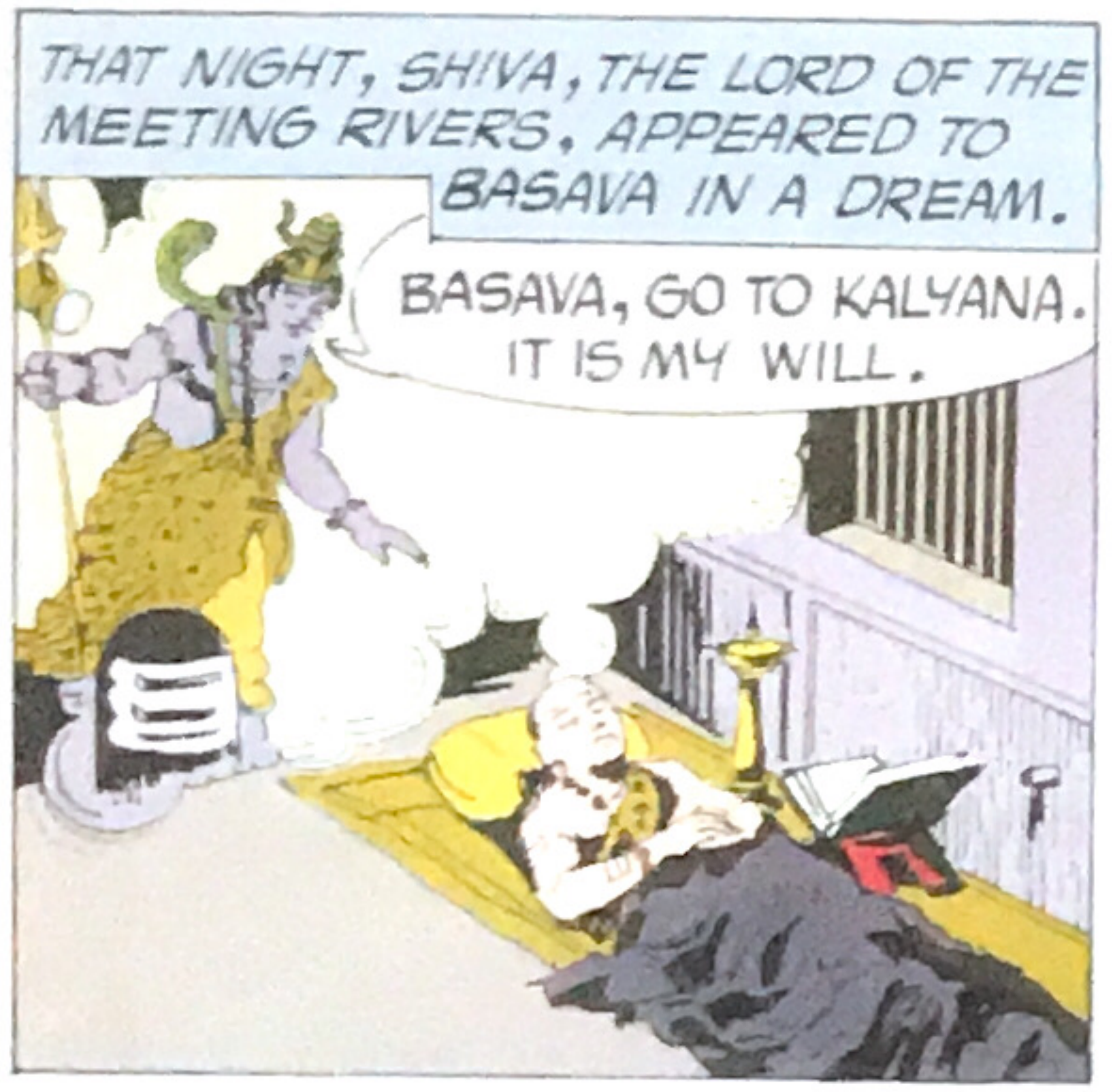


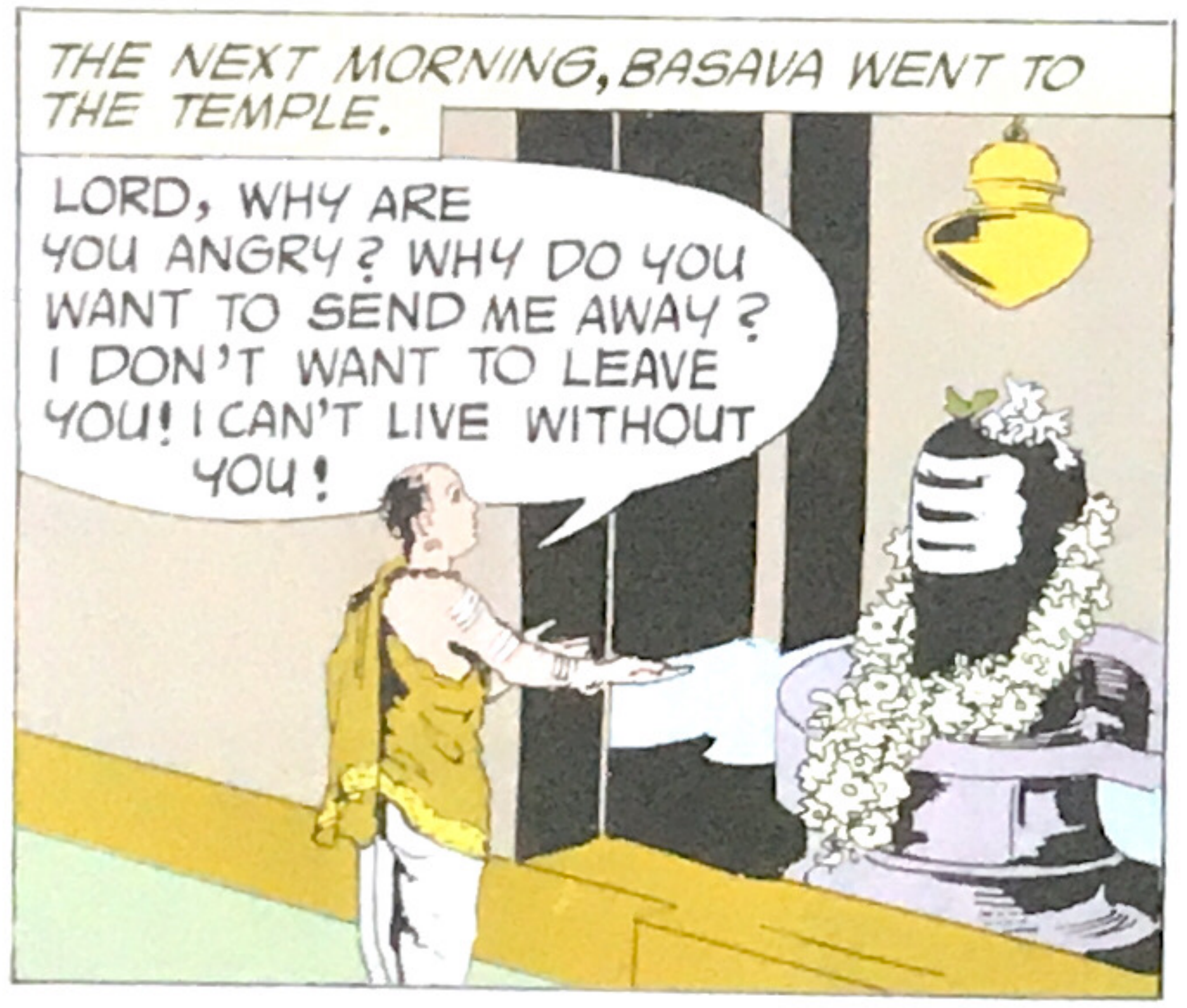
HE SPENT SEVERAL YEARS AT KUDALA SANGAMA THINKING ALWAYS OF LORD SHIVA.

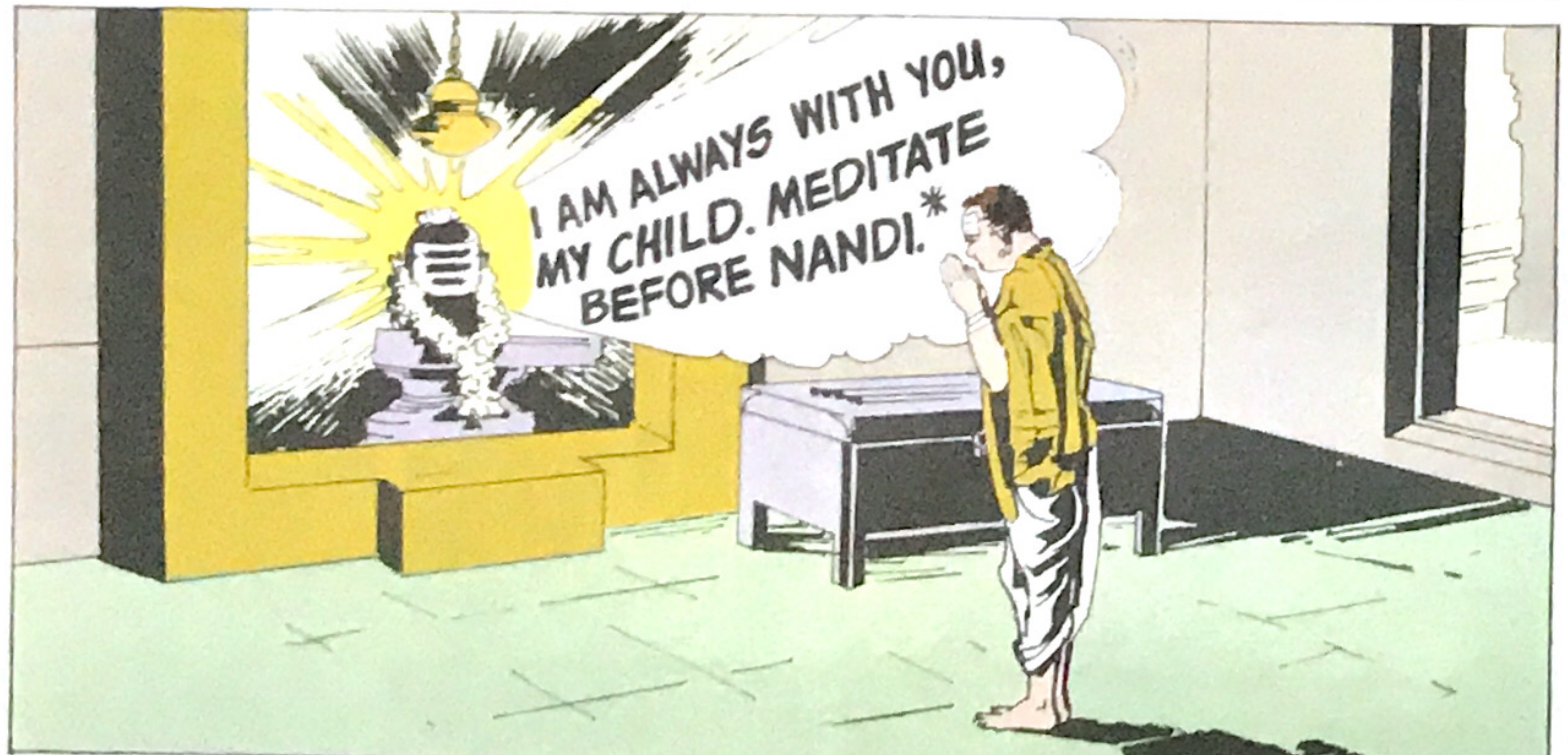

THOUGH I WORSHIP WITH MY HANDS, MY HEART IS NOT HAPPY. WHAT ELSE SHOULD I DO?


WITHOUT YOUR GRACE, I AM NEITHER A WORSHIPPER NOR A BEGGAR, O LORD.


ONE DAY HIS UNCLE, BALADEVA, A MINISTER AT KING BIJJALA'S COURT AT KALYANA CAME TO MEET HIM.
BASAVA, YOU MUST COME TO KALYANA. YOU COULD BE OF GREAT HELP TO KING BIJJALA.
I'D RATHER STAY HERE AT THIS HOLY PLACE, UNCLE.


THAT NIGHT, SHIVA, THE LORD OF THE MEETING RIVERS, APPEARED TO BASAVA IN A DREAM.
BASAVA, GO TO KALYANA. IT IS MY WILL.


THE NEXT MORNING, BASAVA WENT TO THE TEMPLE.
LORD, WHY ARE YOU ANGRY? WHY DO YOU WANT TO SEND ME AWAY? I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE YOU! I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU!


I AM ALWAYS WITH YOU, MY CHILD. MEDITATE BEFORE NANDI.*

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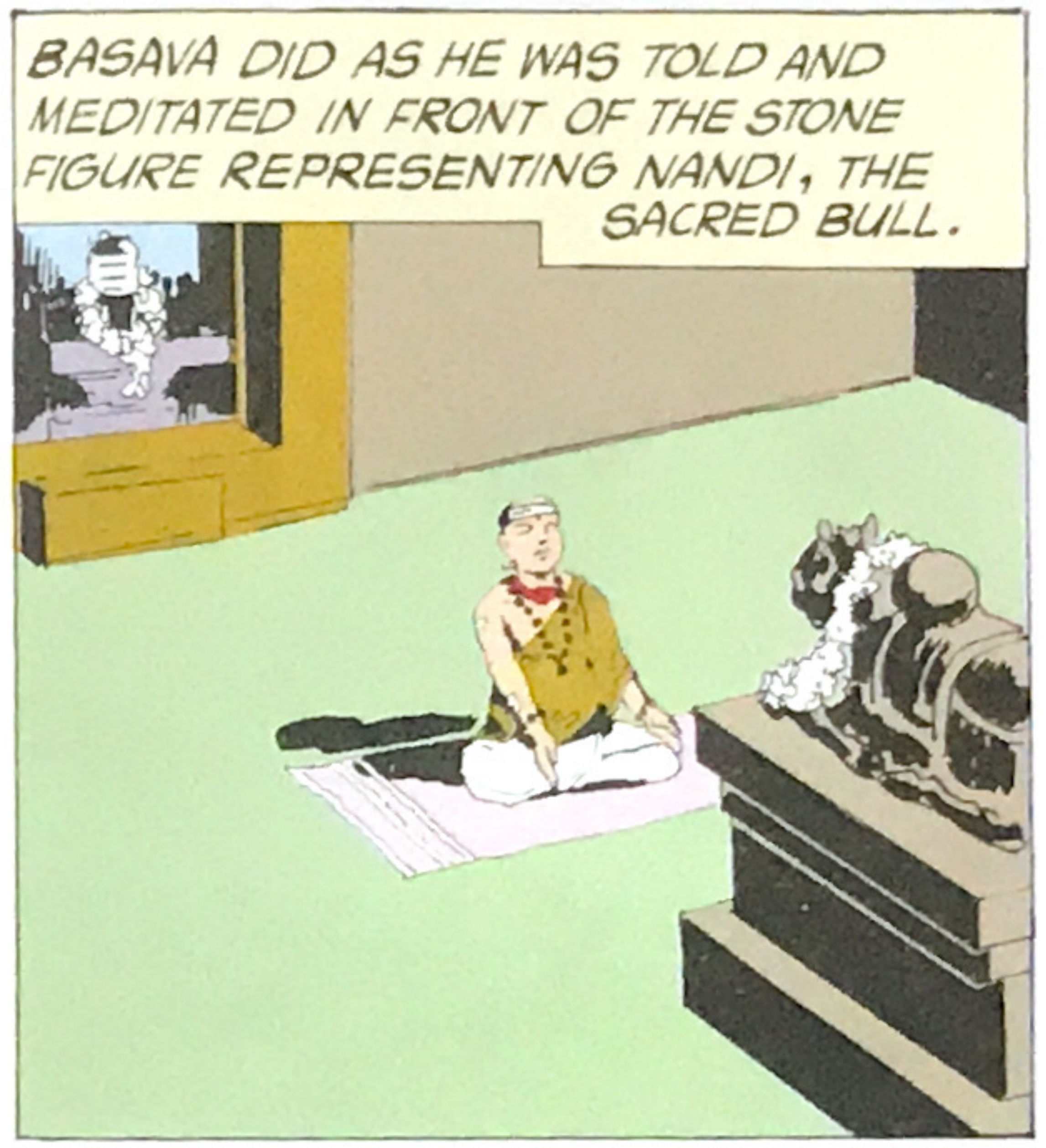
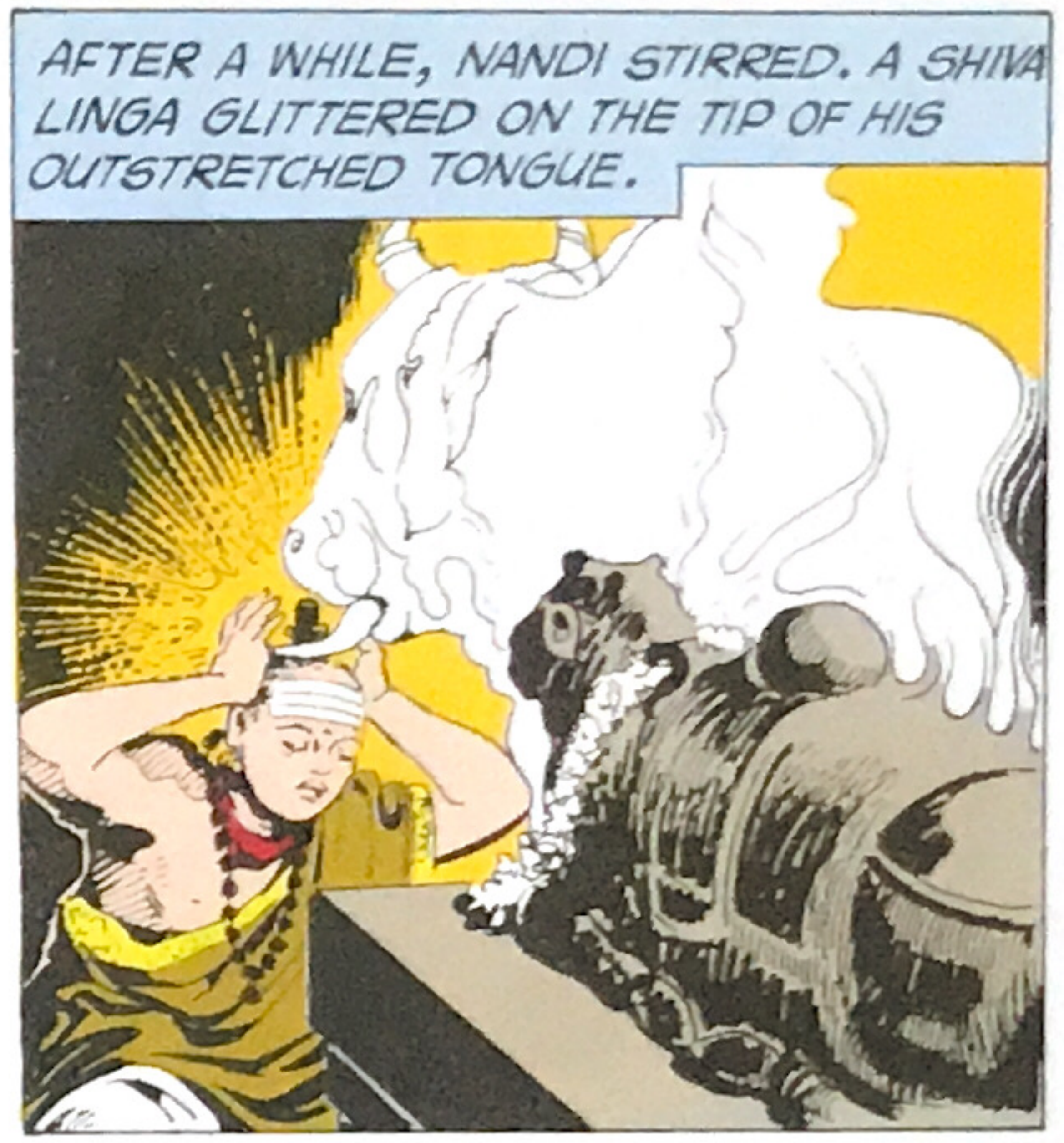
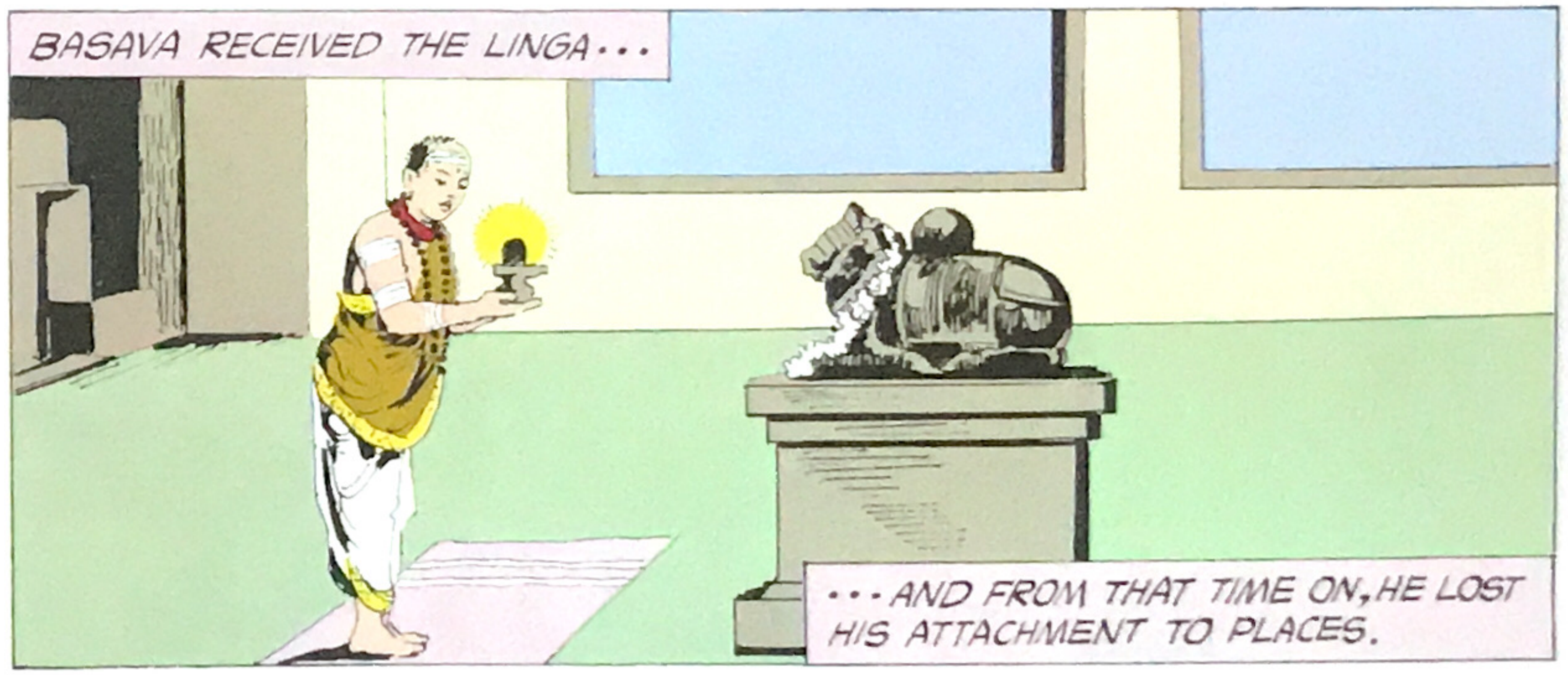
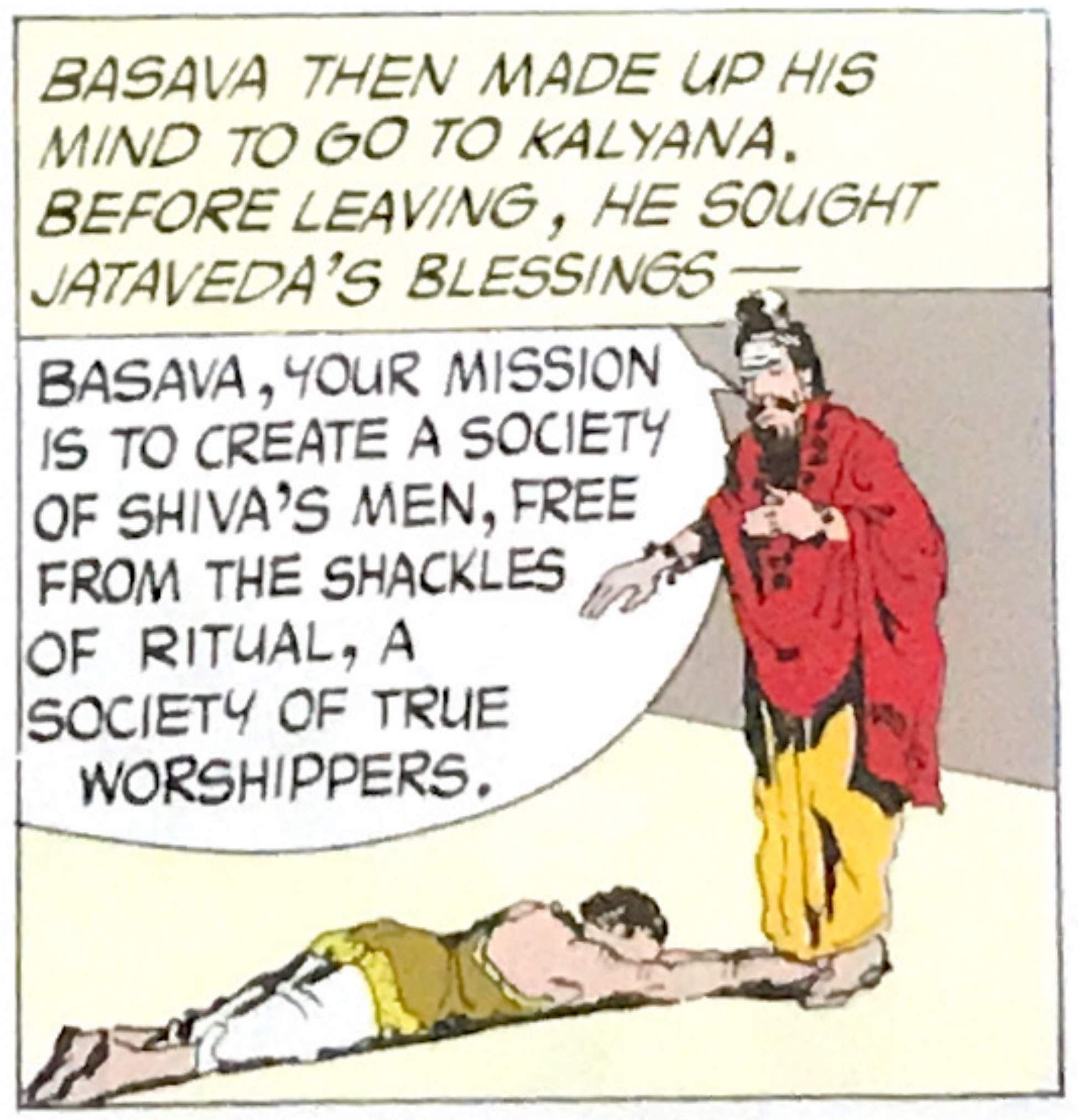
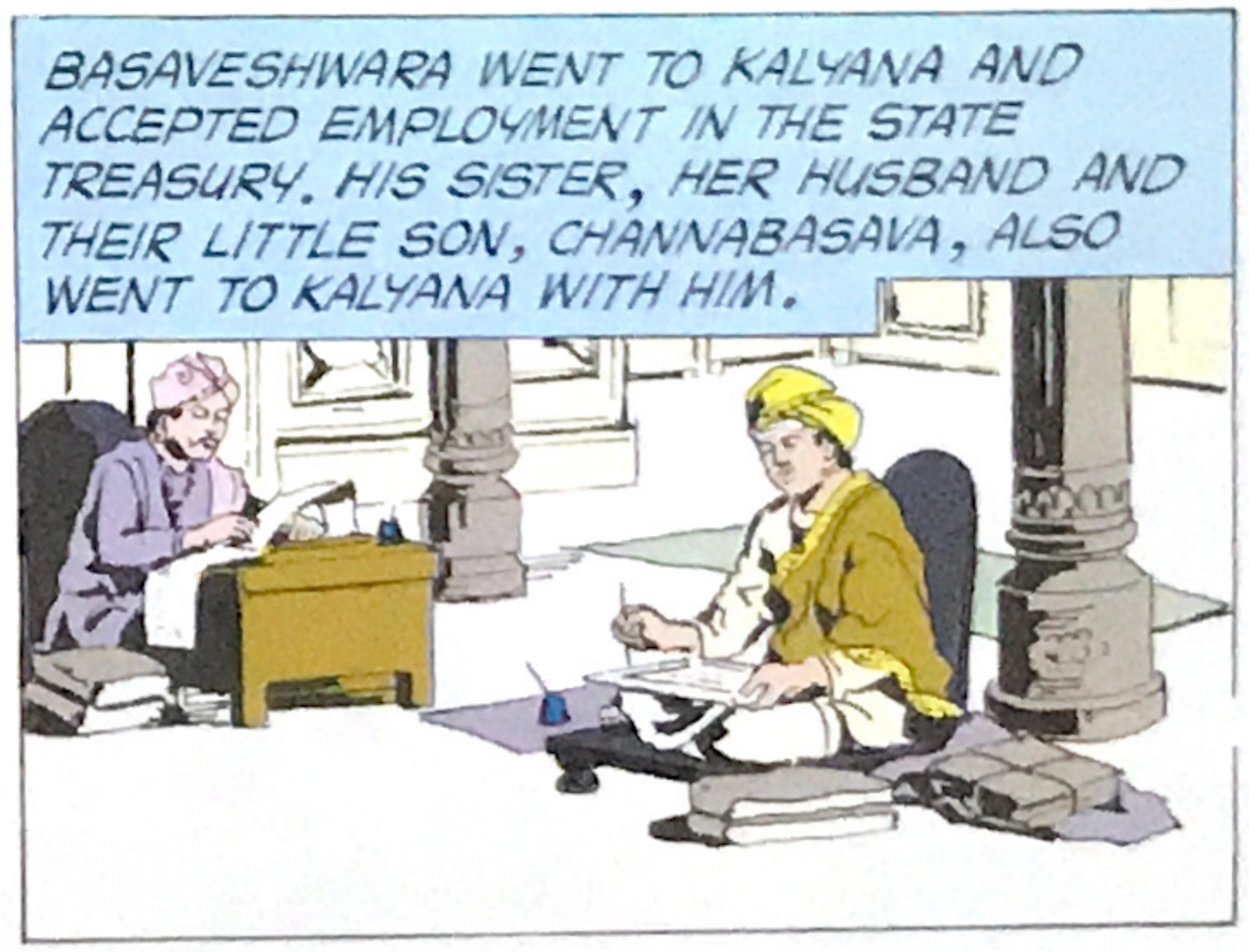
* SHIVA'S VEHICLE

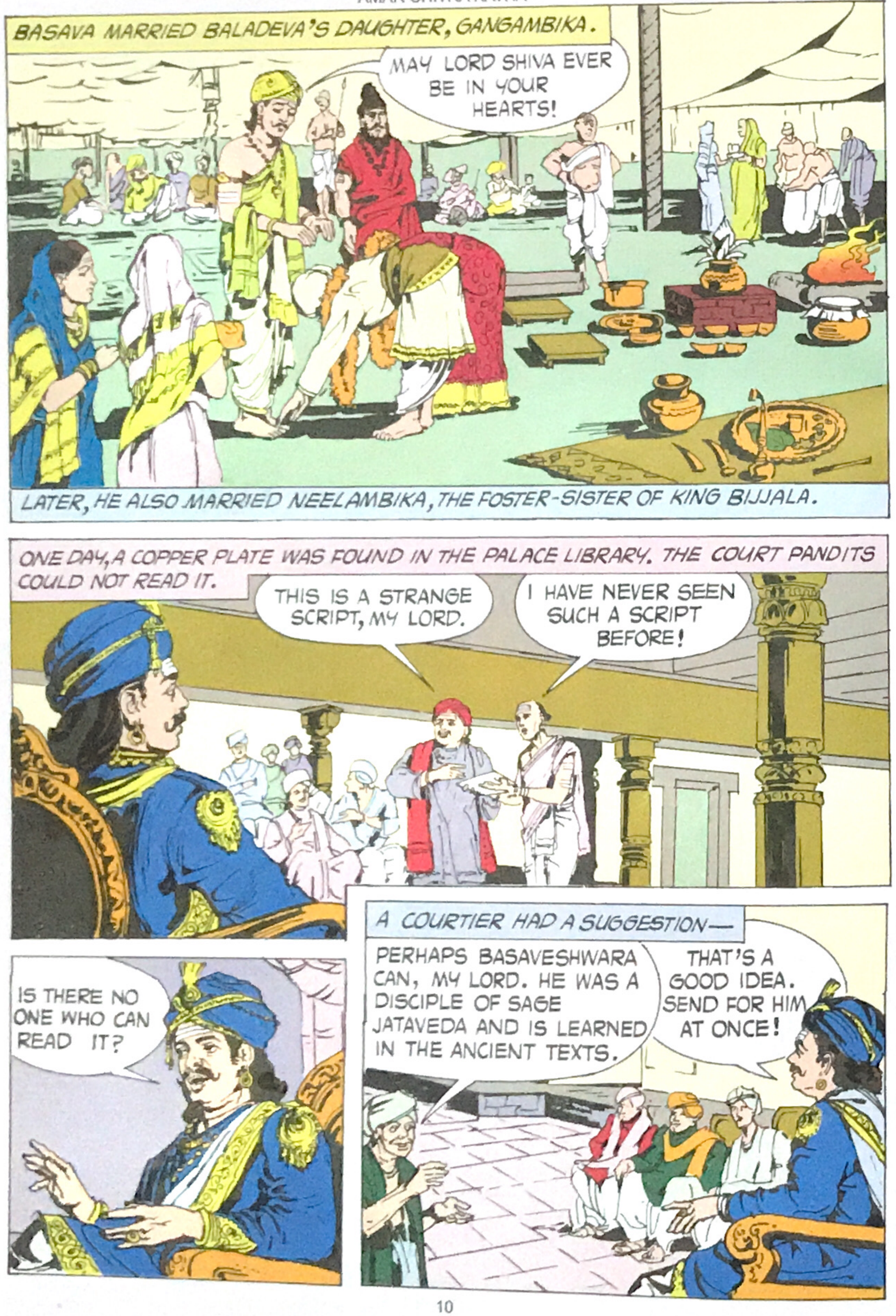

BASAVA DID AS HE WAS TOLD AND MEDITATED IN FRONT OF THE STONE FIGURE REPRESENTING NANDI, THE SACRED BULL.

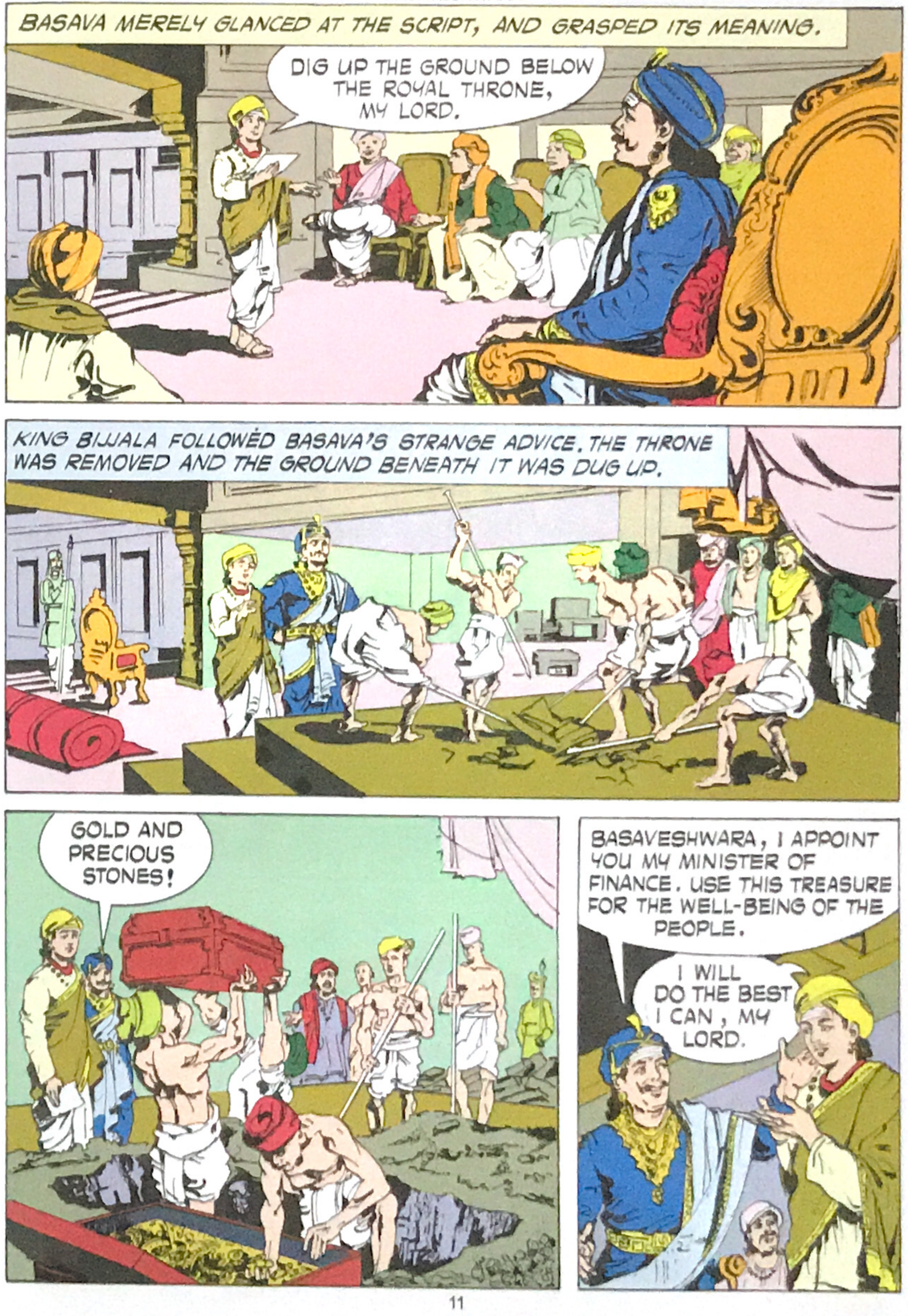

AFTER A WHILE, NANDI STIRRED. A SHIVA LINGA GLITTERED ON THE TIP OF HIS OUTSTRETCHED TONGUE.

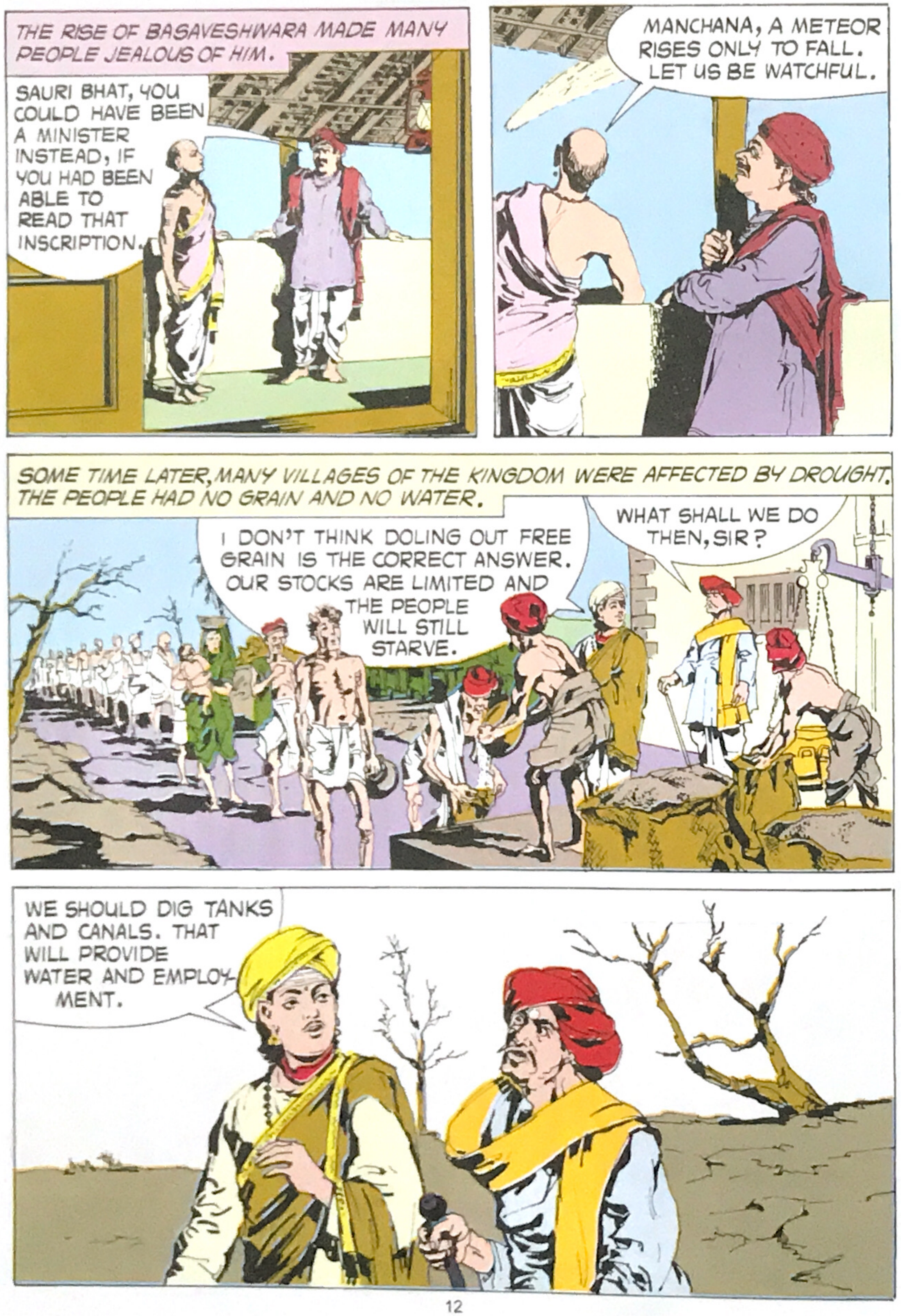

BASAVA RECEIVED THE LINGA...
...AND FROM THAT TIME ON, HE LOST HIS ATTACHMENT TO PLACES.

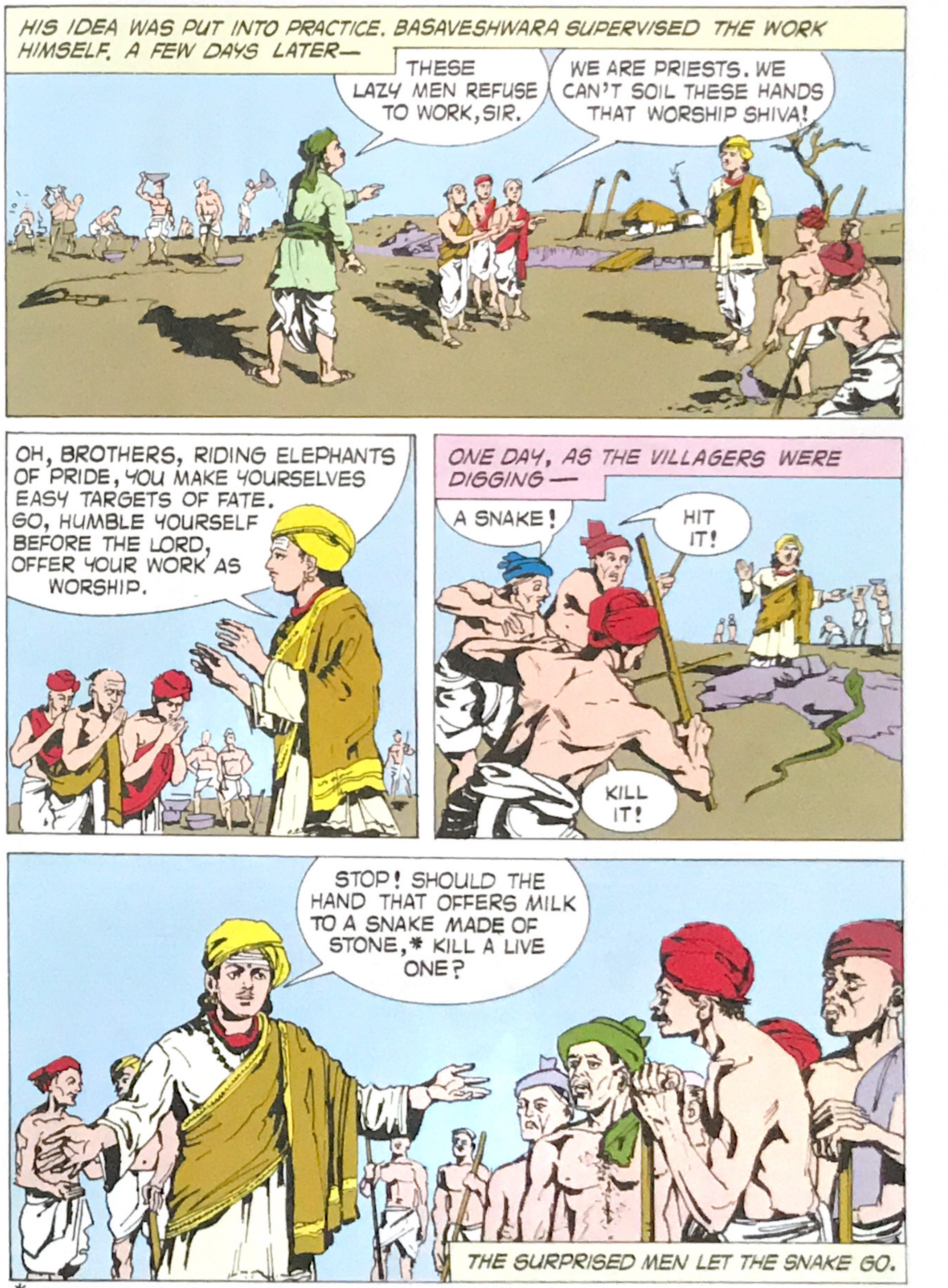

BASAVA THEN MADE UP HIS MIND TO GO TO KALYANA. BEFORE LEAVING, HE SOUGHT JATAVEDA'S BLESSINGS—
BASAVA, YOUR MISSION IS TO CREATE A SOCIETY OF SHIVA'S MEN, FREE FROM THE SHACKLES OF RITUAL, A SOCIETY OF TRUE WORSHIPPERS.


BASAVESHWARA WENT TO KALYANA AND ACCEPTED EMPLOYMENT IN THE STATE TREASURY. HIS SISTER, HER HUSBAND AND THEIR LITTLE SON, CHANNABASAVA, ALSO WENT TO KALYANA WITH HIM.

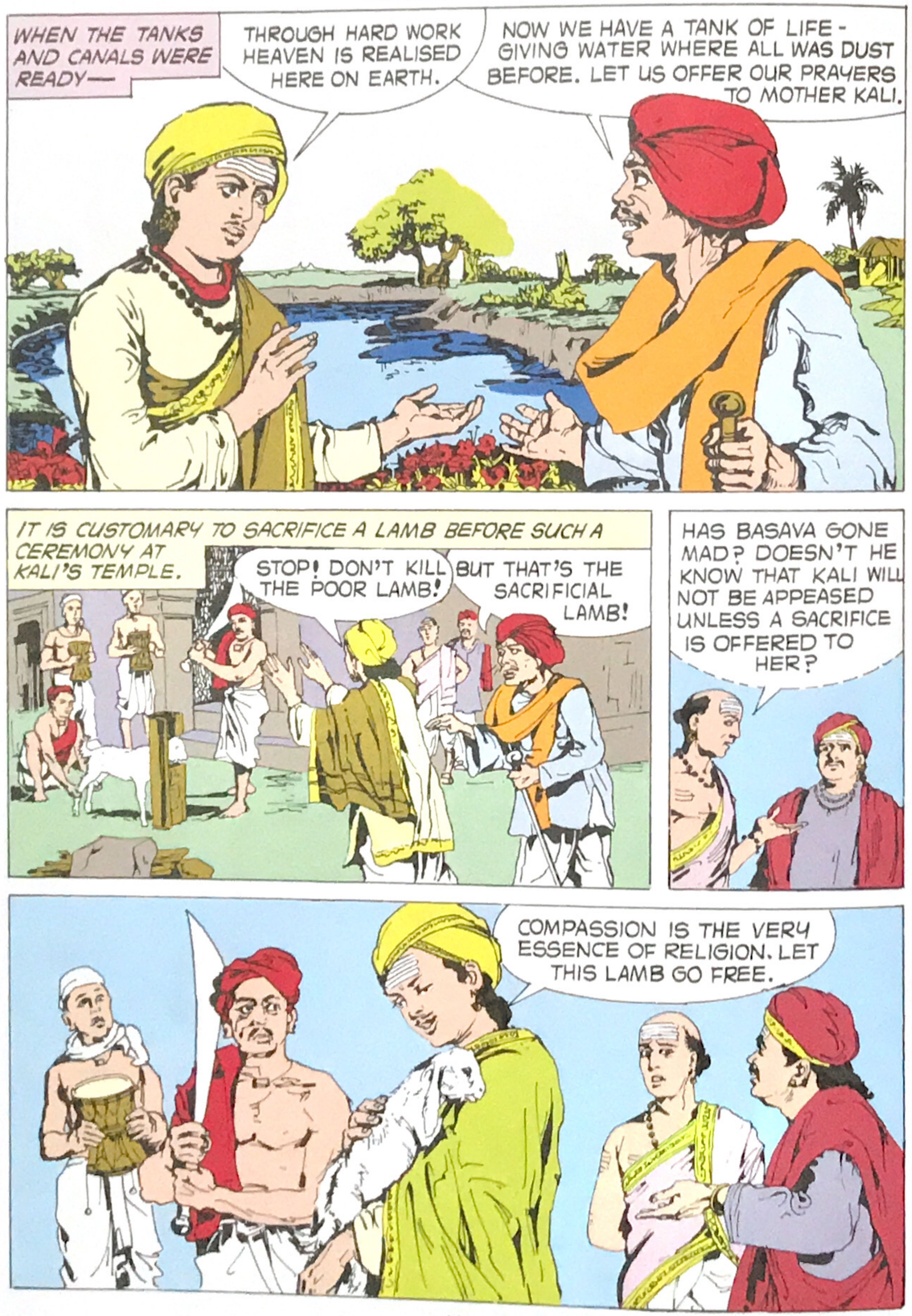

BASAVA MARRIED BALADEVA'S DAUGHTER, GANGAMBIKA.
MAY LORD SHIVA EVER BE IN YOUR HEARTS!
LATER, HE ALSO MARRIED NEELAMBIKA, THE FOSTER-SISTER OF KING BIJJALA.
ONE DAY, A COPPER PLATE WAS FOUND IN THE PALACE LIBRARY. THE COURT PANDITS COULD NOT READ IT.
THIS IS A STRANGE SCRIPT, MY LORD.
I HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH A SCRIPT BEFORE!
IS THERE NO ONE WHO CAN READ IT?
A COURTIER HAD A SUGGESTION—
PERHAPS BASAVESHWARA CAN, MY LORD. HE WAS A DISCIPLE OF SAGE JATAVEDA AND IS LEARNED IN THE ANCIENT TEXTS.
THAT'S A GOOD IDEA. SEND FOR HIM AT ONCE!

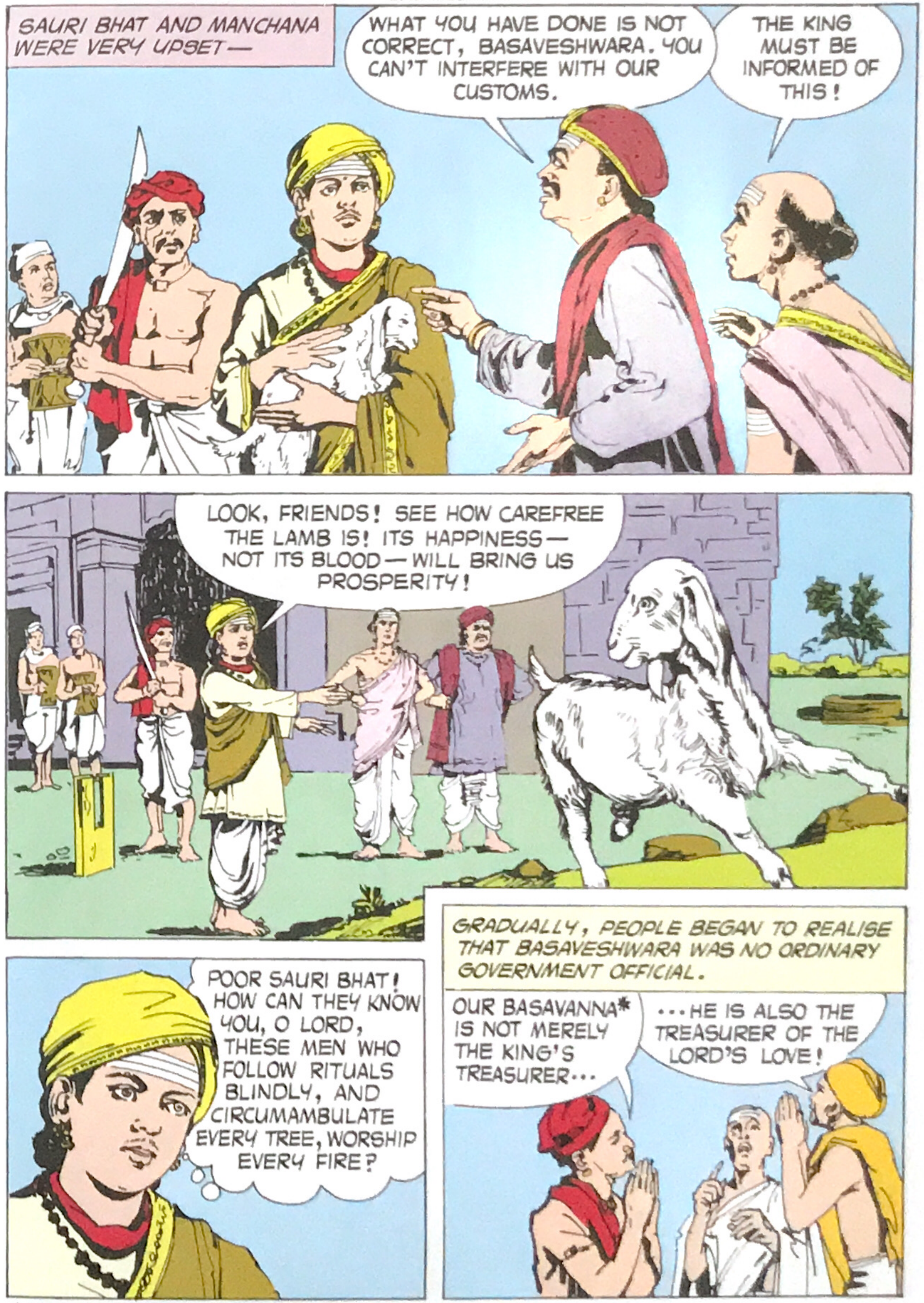

BASAVA MERELY GLANCED AT THE SCRIPT, AND GRASPED ITS MEANING.
DIG UP THE GROUND BELOW THE ROYAL THRONE, MY LORD.
KING BIJJALA FOLLOWED BASAVA'S STRANGE ADVICE. THE THRONE WAS REMOVED AND THE GROUND BENEATH IT WAS DUG UP.
GOLD AND PRECIOUS STONES!
BASAVESHWARA, I APPOINT YOU MY MINISTER OF FINANCE. USE THIS TREASURE FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE.
I WILL DO THE BEST I CAN, MY LORD.


THE RISE OF BASAVESHWARA MADE MANY PEOPLE JEALOUS OF HIM.
SAURI BHAT, YOU COULD HAVE BEEN A MINISTER INSTEAD, IF YOU HAD BEEN ABLE TO READ THAT INSCRIPTION.
MANCHANA, A METEOR RISES ONLY TO FALL. LET US BE WATCHFUL.
SOME TIME LATER, MANY VILLAGES OF THE KINGDOM WERE AFFECTED BY DROUGHT. THE PEOPLE HAD NO GRAIN AND NO WATER.
I DON'T THINK DOLING OUT FREE GRAIN IS THE CORRECT ANSWER. OUR STOCKS ARE LIMITED AND THE PEOPLE WILL STILL STARVE.
WHAT SHALL WE DO THEN, SIR?
WE SHOULD DIG TANKS AND CANALS. THAT WILL PROVIDE WATER AND EMPLOYMENT.


HIS IDEA WAS PUT INTO PRACTICE. BASAVESHWARA SUPERVISED THE WORK HIMSELF. A FEW DAYS LATER—
THESE LAZY MEN REFUSE TO WORK, SIR.
WE ARE PRIESTS. WE CAN'T SOIL THESE HANDS THAT WORSHIP SHIVA!
OH, BROTHERS, RIDING ELEPHANTS OF PRIDE, YOU MAKE YOURSELVES EASY TARGETS OF FATE. GO, HUMBLE YOURSELF BEFORE THE LORD, OFFER YOUR WORK AS WORSHIP.
ONE DAY, AS THE VILLAGERS WERE DIGGING—
A SNAKE!
HIT IT!
KILL IT!
STOP! SHOULD THE HAND THAT OFFERS MILK TO A SNAKE MADE OF STONE,* KILL A LIVE ONE?
THE SURPRISED MEN LET THE SNAKE GO.

* BASAVESHWARA HERE REFERS TO THE PRACTICE OF SNAKE WORSHIP


WHEN THE TANKS AND CANALS WERE READY—
THROUGH HARD WORK HEAVEN IS REALISED HERE ON EARTH.
NOW WE HAVE A TANK OF LIFE-GIVING WATER WHERE ALL WAS DUST BEFORE. LET US OFFER OUR PRAYERS TO MOTHER KALI.
IT IS CUSTOMARY TO SACRIFICE A LAMB BEFORE SUCH A CEREMONY AT KALI'S TEMPLE.
STOP! DON'T KILL THE POOR LAMB!
BUT THAT'S THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB!
HAS BASAVA GONE MAD? DOESN'T HE KNOW THAT KALI WILL NOT BE APPEASED UNLESS A SACRIFICE IS OFFERED TO HER?
COMPASSION IS THE VERY ESSENCE OF RELIGION. LET THIS LAMB GO FREE.


SAURI BHAT AND MANCHANA WERE VERY UPSET—
WHAT YOU HAVE DONE IS NOT CORRECT, BASAVESHWARA. YOU CAN'T INTERFERE WITH OUR CUSTOMS.
THE KING MUST BE INFORMED OF THIS!
LOOK, FRIENDS! SEE HOW CAREFREE THE LAMB IS! ITS HAPPINESS—NOT ITS BLOOD—WILL BRING US PROSPERITY!
POOR SAURI BHAT! HOW CAN THEY KNOW YOU, O LORD, THESE MEN WHO FOLLOW RITUALS BLINDLY, AND CIRCUMAMBULATE EVERY TREE, WORSHIP EVERY FIRE?
GRADUALLY, PEOPLE BEGAN TO REALISE THAT BASAVESHWARA WAS NO ORDINARY GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL.
OUR BASAVANNA* IS NOT MERELY THE KING'S TREASURER...
...HE IS ALSO THE TREASURER OF THE LORD'S LOVE!

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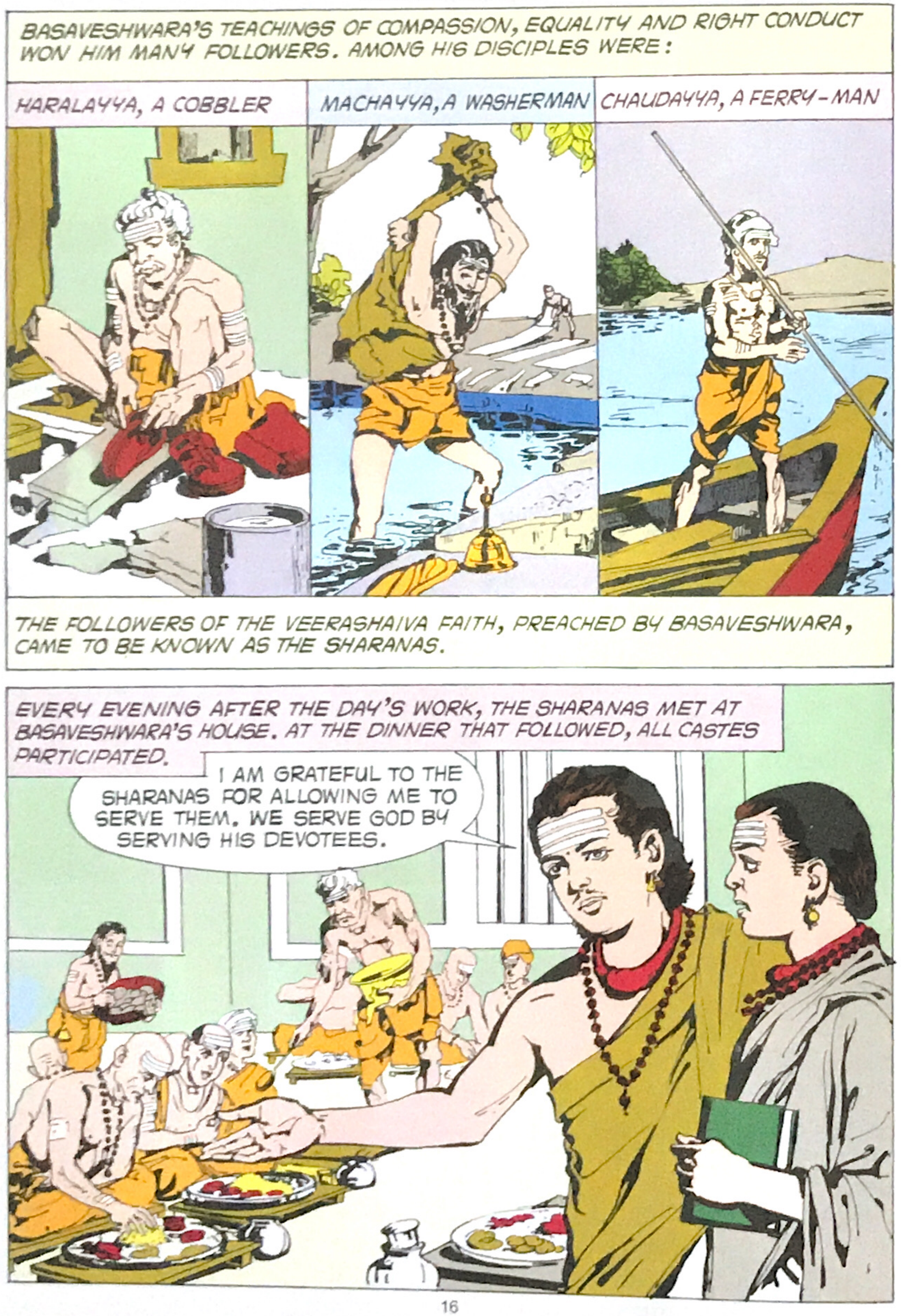
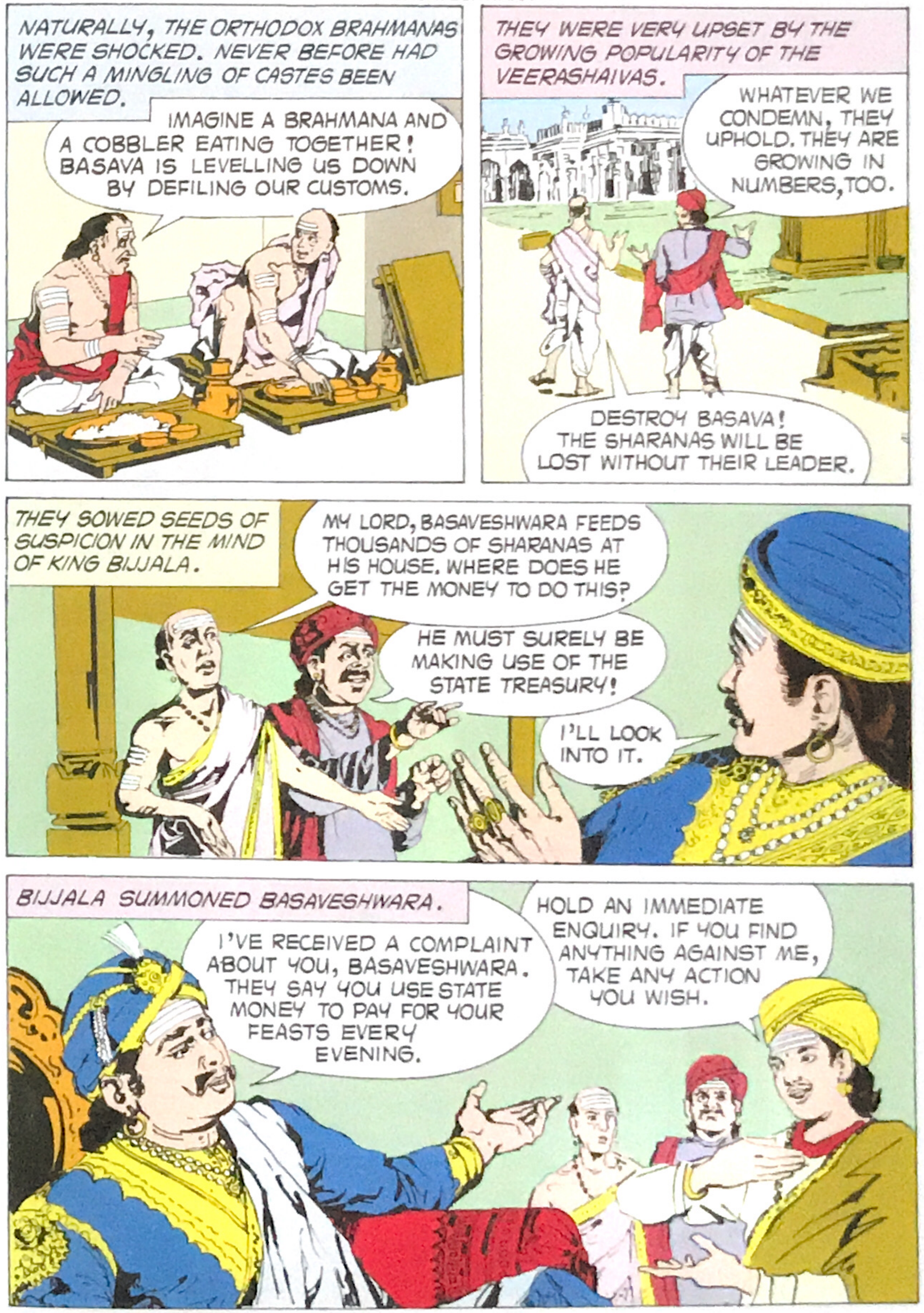
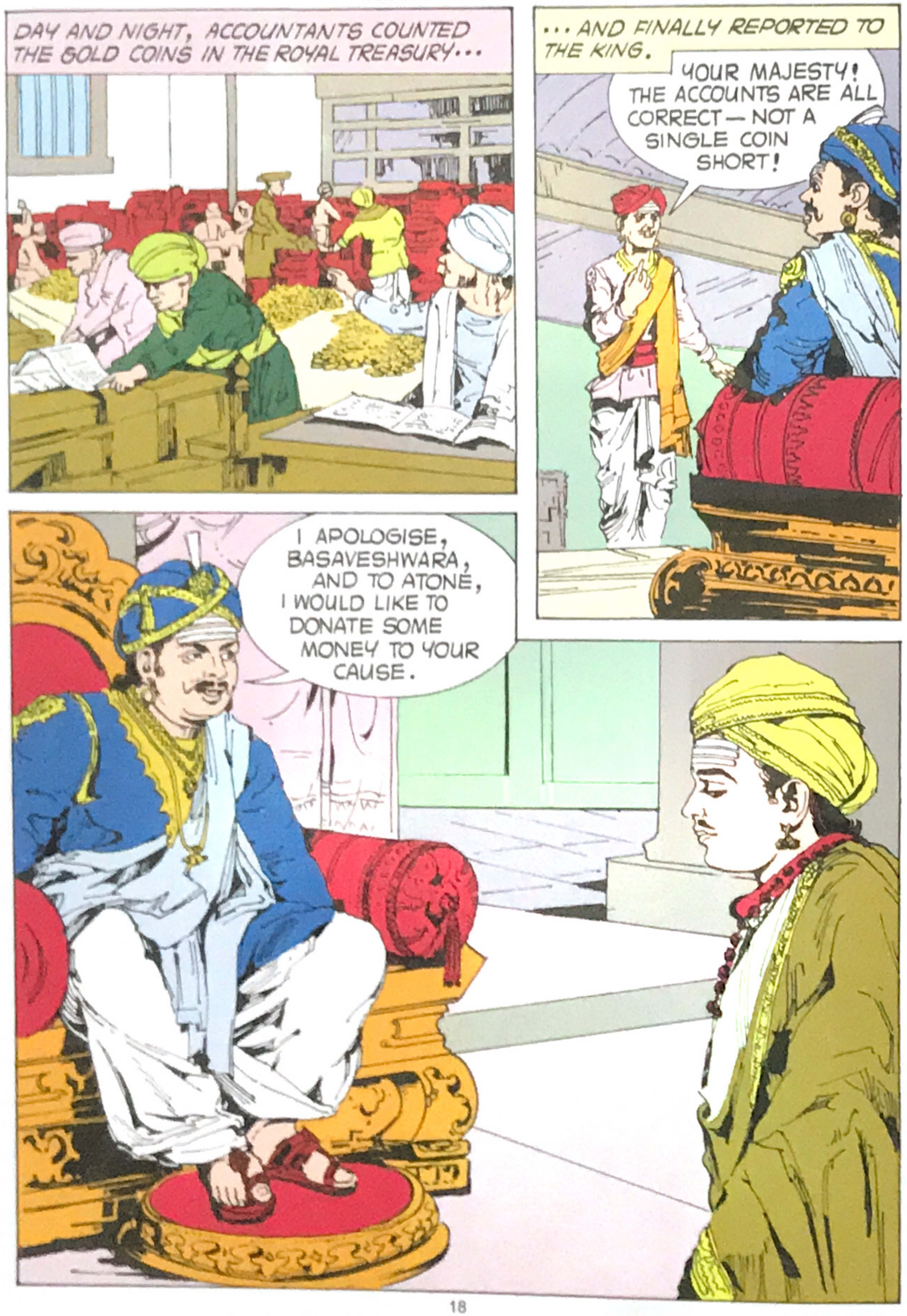
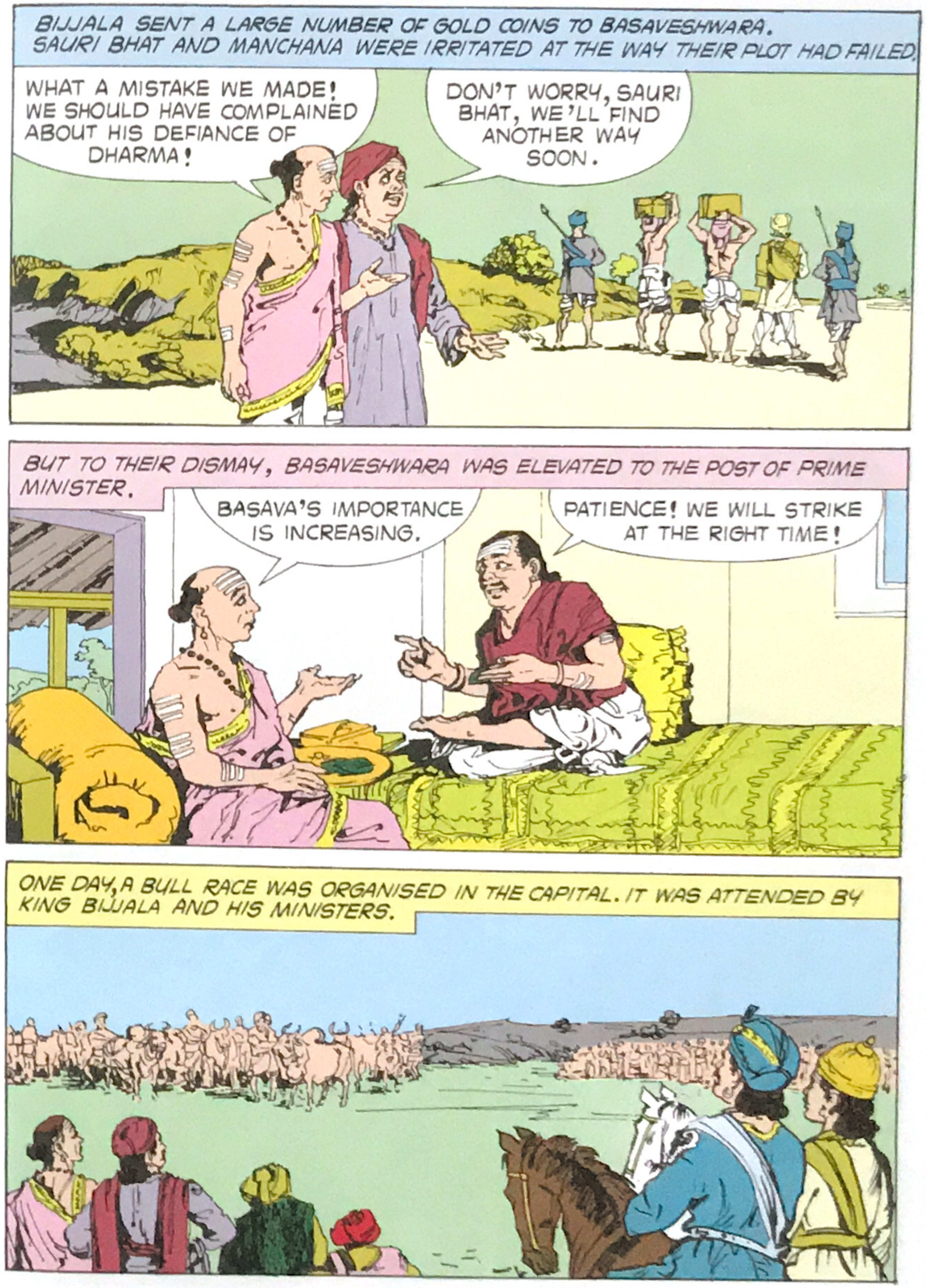
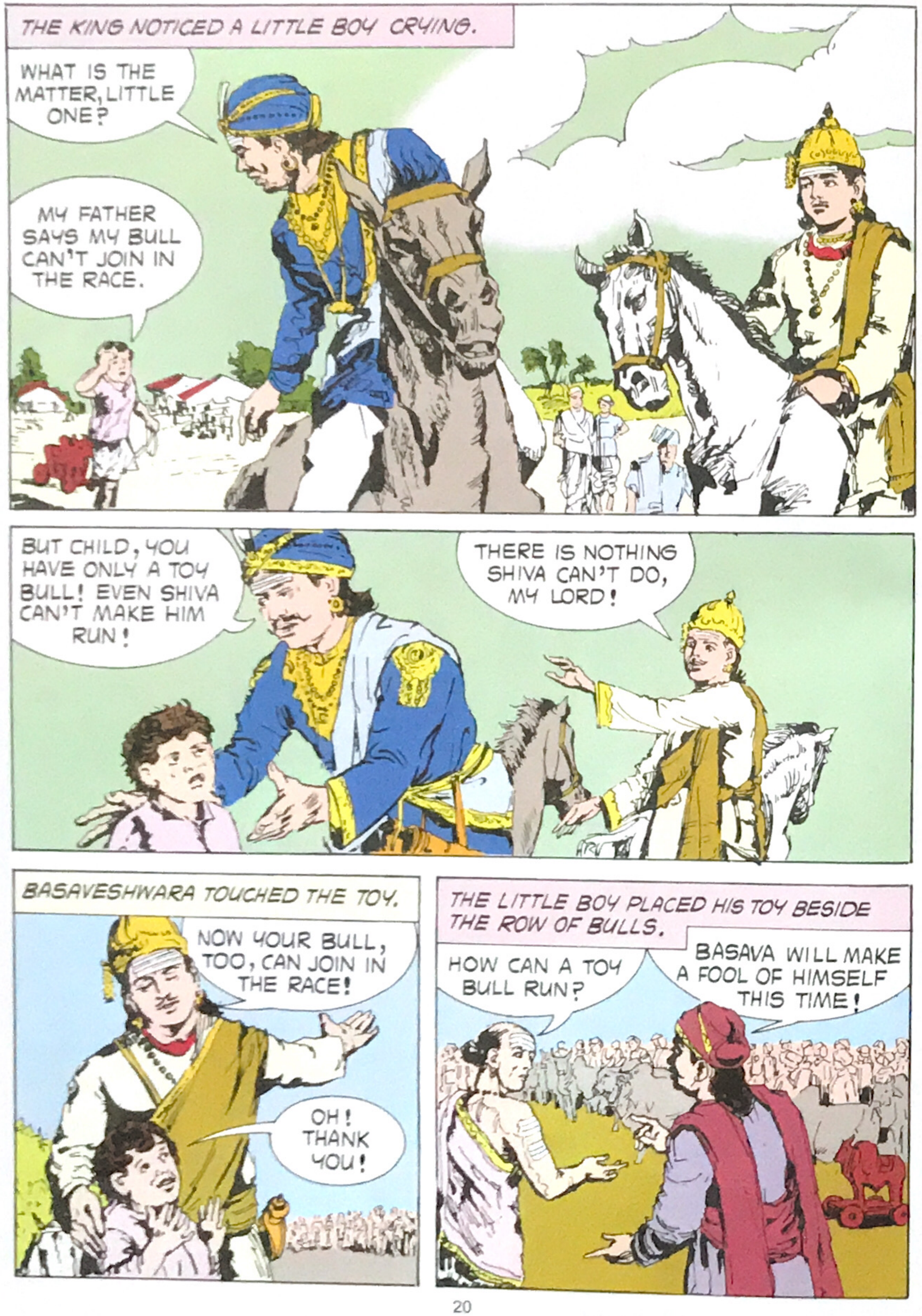
* ANNA = ELDER BROTHER

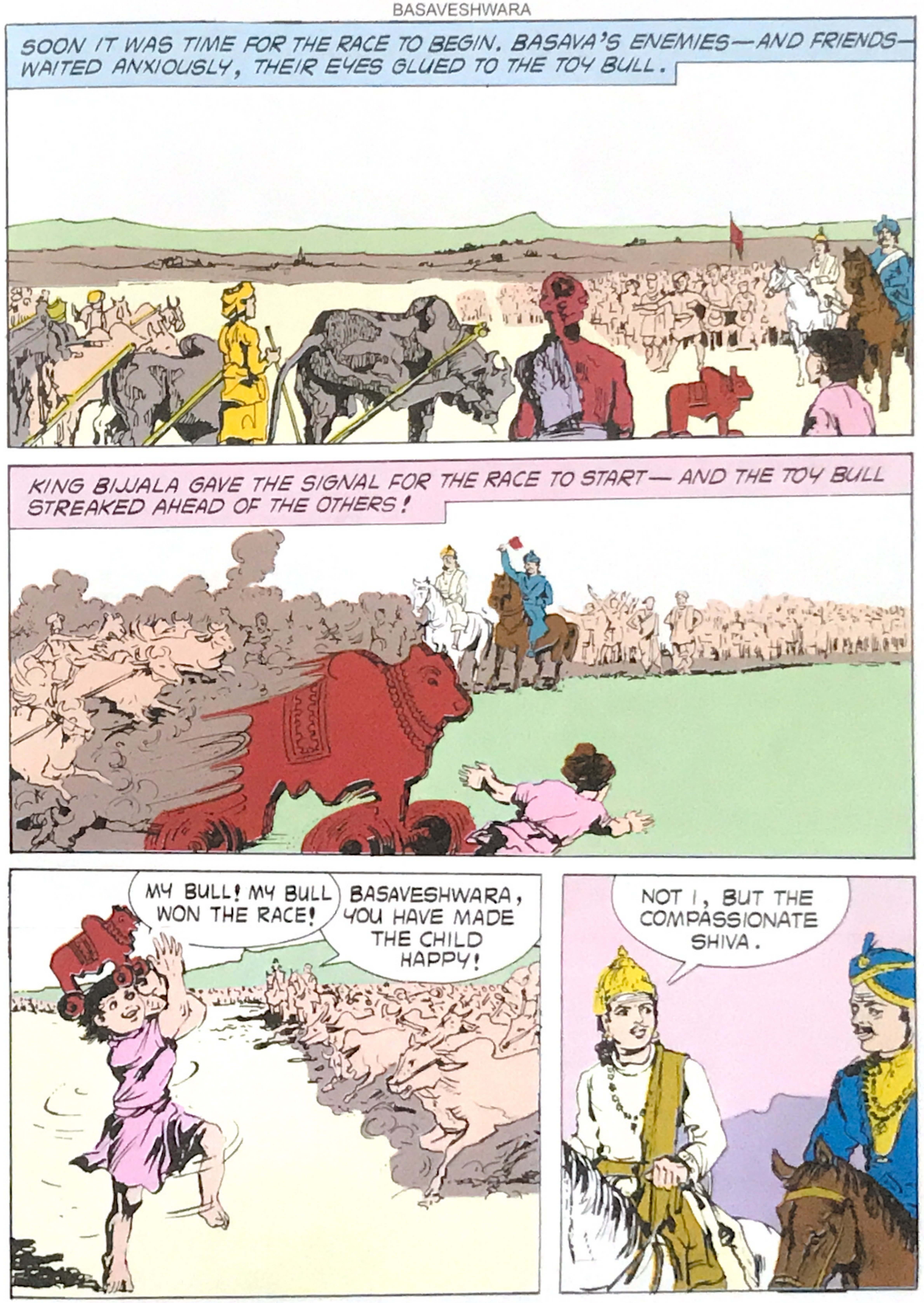

BASAVESHWARA'S TEACHINGS OF COMPASSION, EQUALITY AND RIGHT CONDUCT WON HIM MANY FOLLOWERS. AMONG HIS DISCIPLES WERE:
HARALAYYA, A COBBLER
MACHAYYA, A WASHERMAN
CHAUDAYYA, A FERRY-MAN
THE FOLLOWERS OF THE VEERASHAIVA FAITH, PREACHED BY BASAVESHWARA, CAME TO BE KNOWN AS THE SHARANAS.
EVERY EVENING AFTER THE DAY'S WORK, THE SHARANAS MET AT BASAVESHWARA'S HOUSE. AT THE DINNER THAT FOLLOWED, ALL CASTES PARTICIPATED.
I AM GRATEFUL TO THE SHARANAS FOR ALLOWING ME TO SERVE THEM. WE SERVE GOD BY SERVING HIS DEVOTEES.


NATURALLY, THE ORTHODOX BRAHMANAS WERE SHOCKED. NEVER BEFORE HAD SUCH A MINGLING OF CASTES BEEN ALLOWED.
IMAGINE A BRAHMANA AND A COBBLER EATING TOGETHER! BASAVA IS LEVELLING US DOWN BY DEFILING OUR CUSTOMS.
THEY WERE VERY UPSET BY THE GROWING POPULARITY OF THE VEERASHAIVAS.
WHATEVER WE CONDEMN, THEY UPHOLD. THEY ARE GROWING IN NUMBERS, TOO.
DESTROY BASAVA! THE SHARANAS WILL BE LOST WITHOUT THEIR LEADER.
THEY SOWED SEEDS OF SUSPICION IN THE MIND OF KING BIJJALA.
MY LORD, BASAVESHWARA FEEDS THOUSANDS OF SHARANAS AT HIS HOUSE. WHERE DOES HE GET THE MONEY TO DO THIS?
HE MUST SURELY BE MAKING USE OF THE STATE TREASURY!
I'LL LOOK INTO IT.
BIJJALA SUMMONED BASAVESHWARA.
I'VE RECEIVED A COMPLAINT ABOUT YOU, BASAVESHWARA. THEY SAY YOU USE STATE MONEY TO PAY FOR YOUR FEASTS EVERY EVENING.
HOLD AN IMMEDIATE ENQUIRY. IF YOU FIND ANYTHING AGAINST ME, TAKE ANY ACTION YOU WISH.

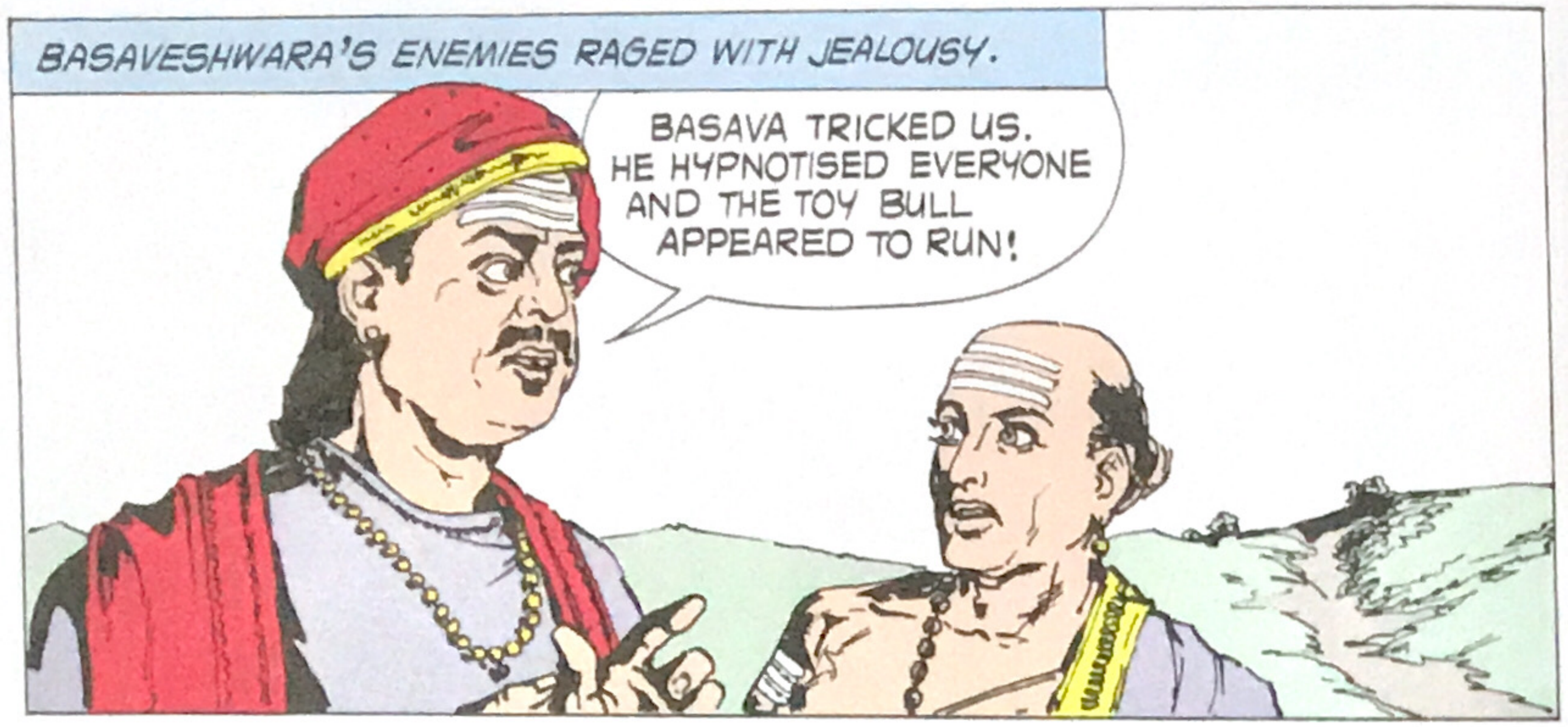

DAY AND NIGHT, ACCOUNTANTS COUNTED THE GOLD COINS IN THE ROYAL TREASURY...
...AND FINALLY REPORTED TO THE KING.
YOUR MAJESTY! THE ACCOUNTS ARE ALL CORRECT — NOT A SINGLE COIN SHORT!
I APOLOGISE, BASAVESHWARA, AND TO ATONE, I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE SOME MONEY TO YOUR CAUSE.


BIJJALA SENT A LARGE NUMBER OF GOLD COINS TO BASAVESHWARA. SAURI BHAT AND MANCHANA WERE IRRITATED AT THE WAY THEIR PLOT HAD FAILED.
WHAT A MISTAKE WE MADE! WE SHOULD HAVE COMPLAINED ABOUT HIS DEFIANCE OF DHARMA!
DON'T WORRY, SAURI BHAT, WE'LL FIND ANOTHER WAY SOON.
BUT TO THEIR DISMAY, BASAVESHWARA WAS ELEVATED TO THE POST OF PRIME MINISTER.
BASAVA'S IMPORTANCE IS INCREASING.
PATIENCE! WE WILL STRIKE AT THE RIGHT TIME!
ONE DAY, A BULL RACE WAS ORGANISED IN THE CAPITAL. IT WAS ATTENDED BY KING BIJJALA AND HIS MINISTERS.

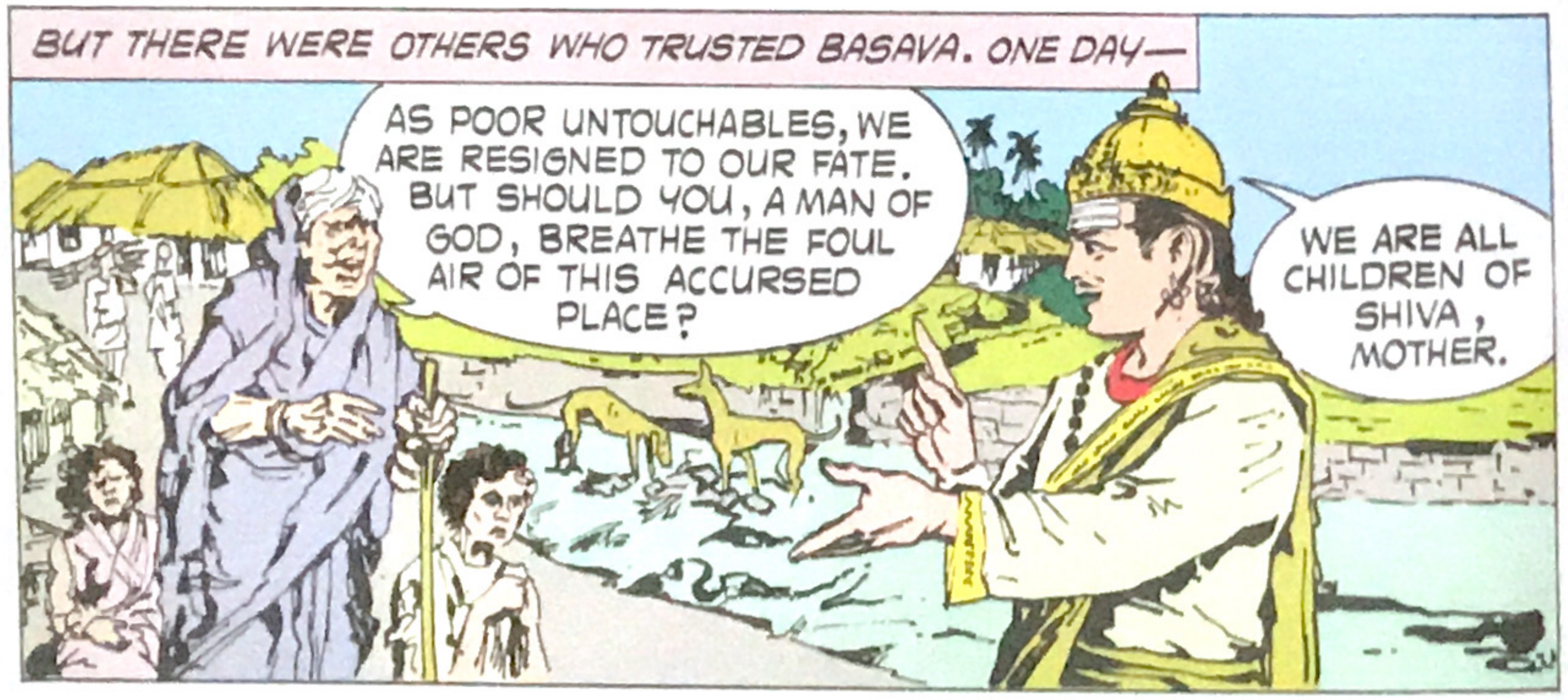

THE KING NOTICED A LITTLE BOY CRYING.
WHAT IS THE MATTER, LITTLE ONE?
MY FATHER SAYS MY BULL CAN'T JOIN IN THE RACE.
BUT CHILD, YOU HAVE ONLY A TOY BULL! EVEN SHIVA CAN'T MAKE HIM RUN!
THERE IS NOTHING SHIVA CAN'T DO, MY LORD!
BASAVESHWARA TOUCHED THE TOY.
NOW YOUR BULL, TOO, CAN JOIN IN THE RACE!
OH! THANK YOU!
THE LITTLE BOY PLACED HIS TOY BESIDE THE ROW OF BULLS.
HOW CAN A TOY BULL RUN?
BASAVA WILL MAKE A FOOL OF HIMSELF THIS TIME!


SOON IT WAS TIME FOR THE RACE TO BEGIN. BASAVA'S ENEMIES—AND FRIENDS—WAITED ANXIOUSLY, THEIR EYES GLUED TO THE TOY BULL.
KING BIJJALA GAVE THE SIGNAL FOR THE RACE TO START— AND THE TOY BULL STREAKED AHEAD OF THE OTHERS!
MY BULL! MY BULL WON THE RACE!
BASAVESHWARA, YOU HAVE MADE THE CHILD HAPPY!
NOT I, BUT THE COMPASSIONATE SHIVA.

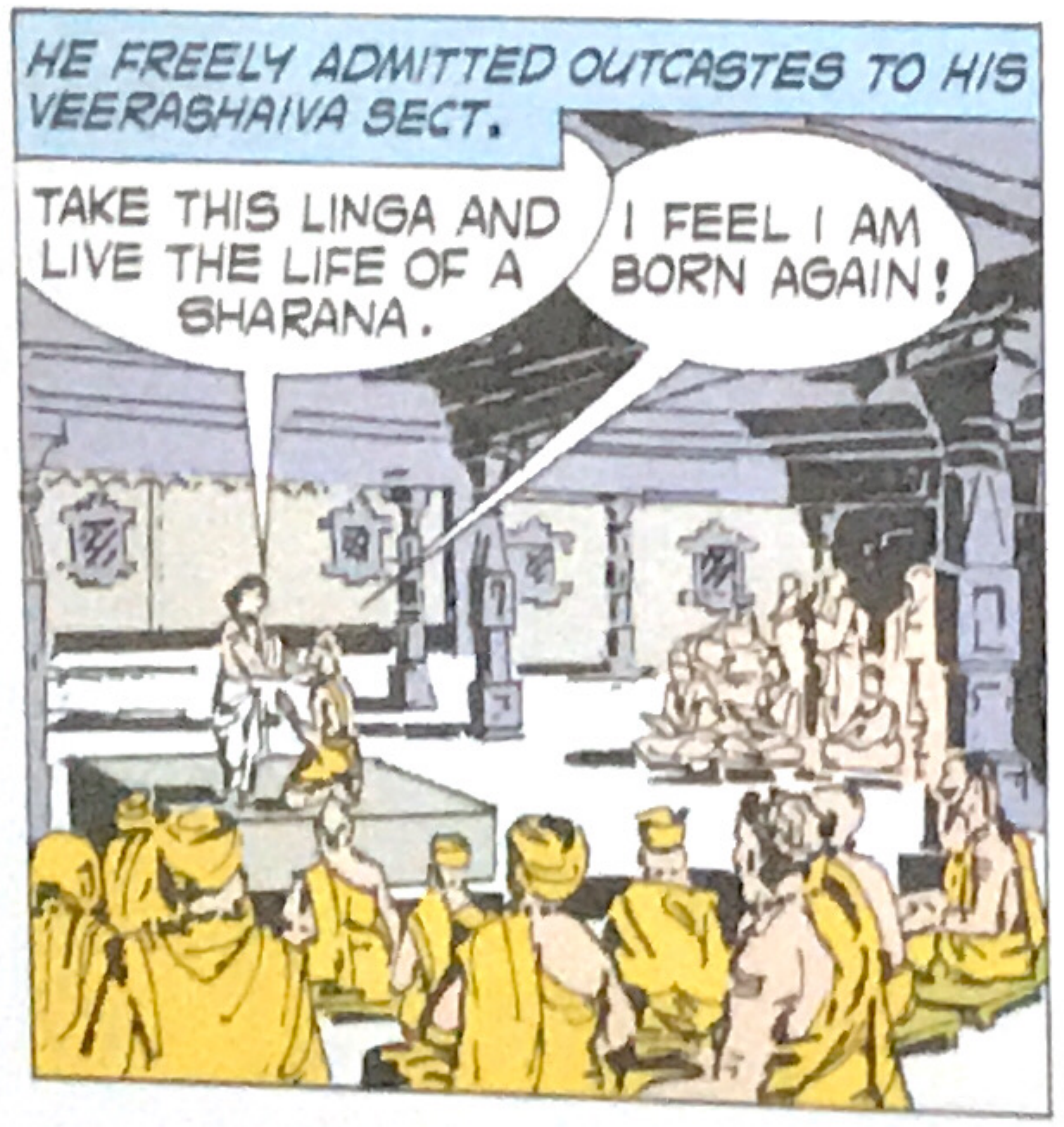
BASAVESHWARA'S ENEMIES RAGED WITH JEALOUSY.


BASAVA TRICKED US. HE HYPNOTISED EVERYONE AND THE TOY BULL APPEARED TO RUN!

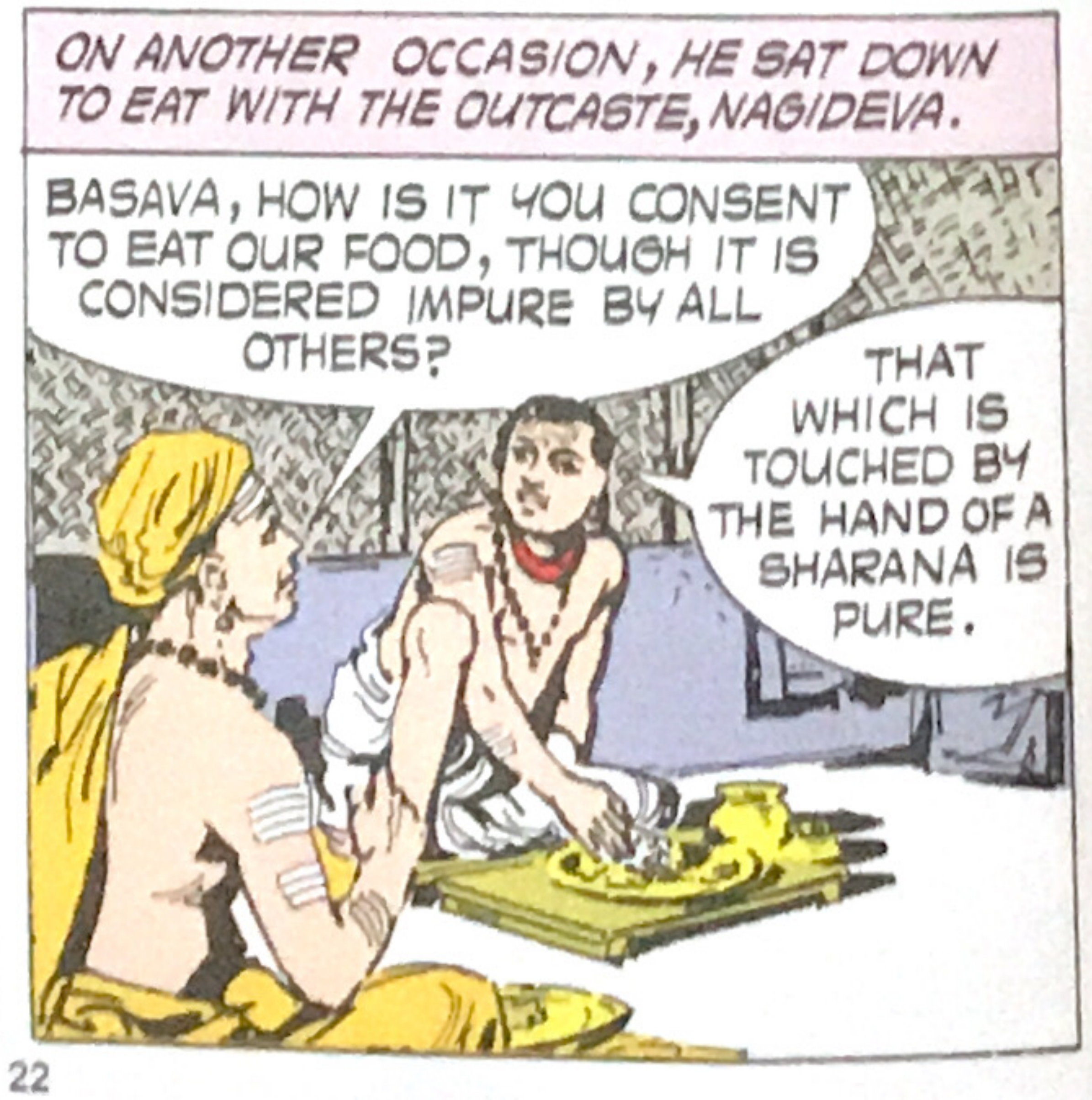
BUT THERE WERE OTHERS WHO TRUSTED BASAVA. ONE DAY—


AS POOR UNTOUCHABLES, WE ARE RESIGNED TO OUR FATE. BUT SHOULD YOU, A MAN OF GOD, BREATHE THE FOUL AIR OF THIS ACCURSED PLACE?
WE ARE ALL CHILDREN OF SHIVA, MOTHER.

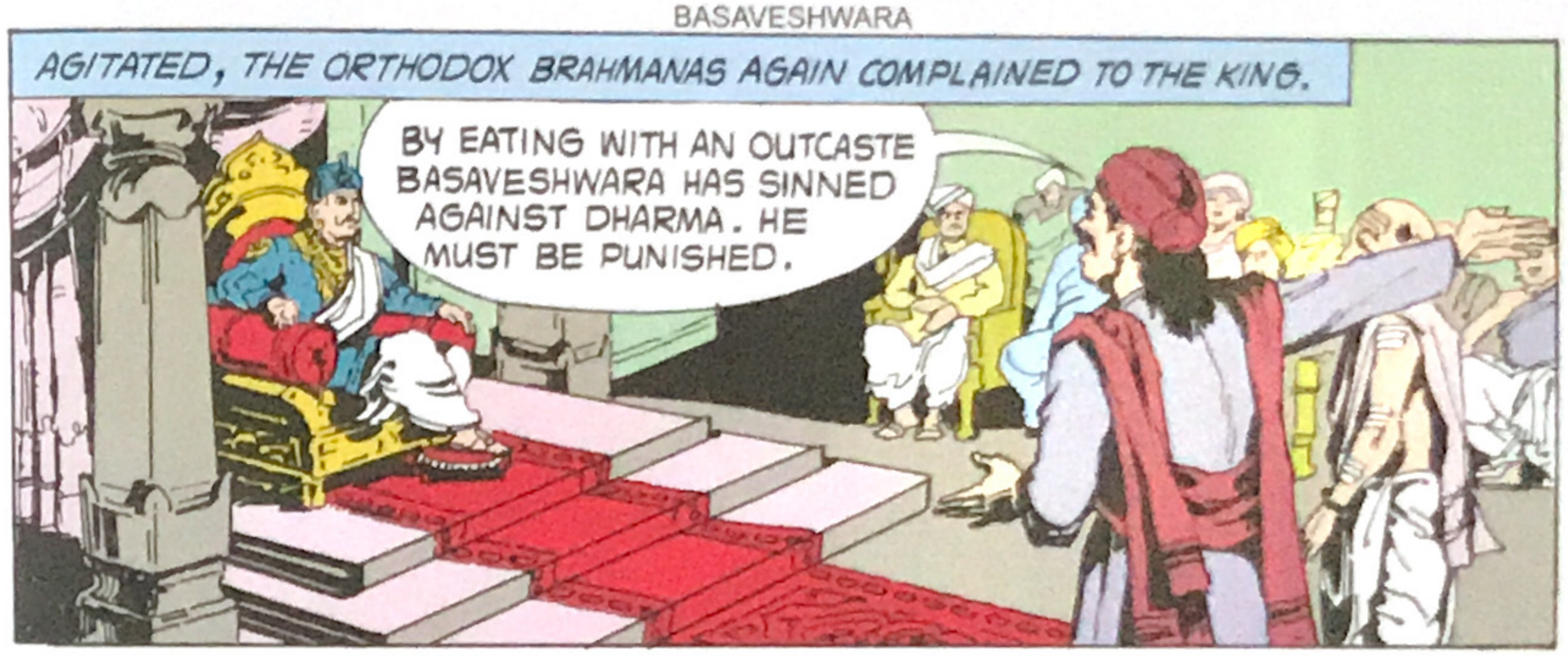
HE FREELY ADMITTED OUTCASTES TO HIS VEERASHAIVA SECT.


TAKE THIS LINGA AND LIVE THE LIFE OF A SHARANA.
I FEEL I AM BORN AGAIN!

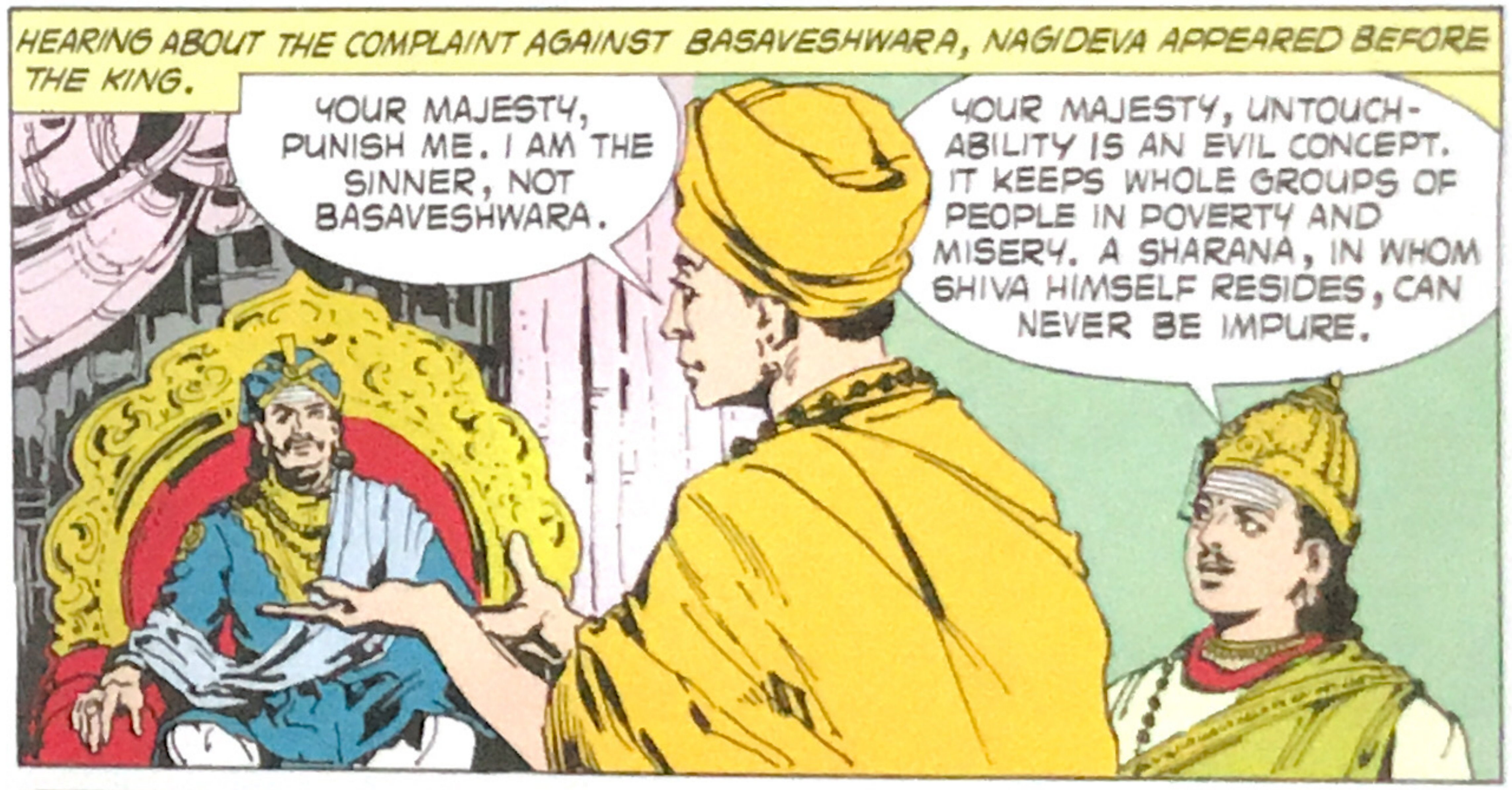
ON ANOTHER OCCASION, HE SAT DOWN TO EAT WITH THE OUTCASTE, NAGIDEVA.


BASAVA, HOW IS IT YOU CONSENT TO EAT OUR FOOD, THOUGH IT IS CONSIDERED IMPURE BY ALL OTHERS?
THAT WHICH IS TOUCHED BY THE HAND OF A SHARANA IS PURE.

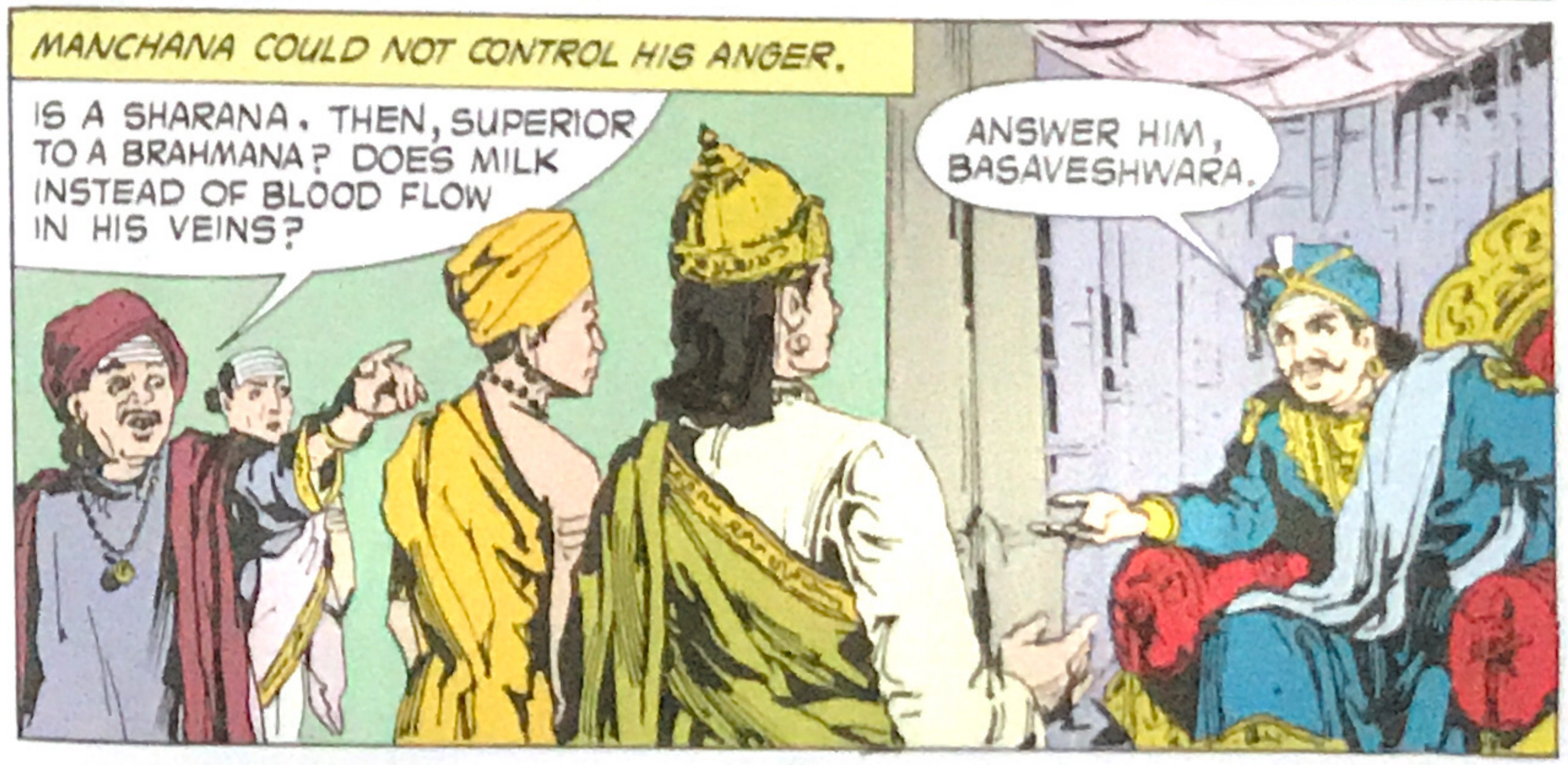
AGITATED, THE ORTHODOX BRAHMANAS AGAIN COMPLAINED TO THE KING.

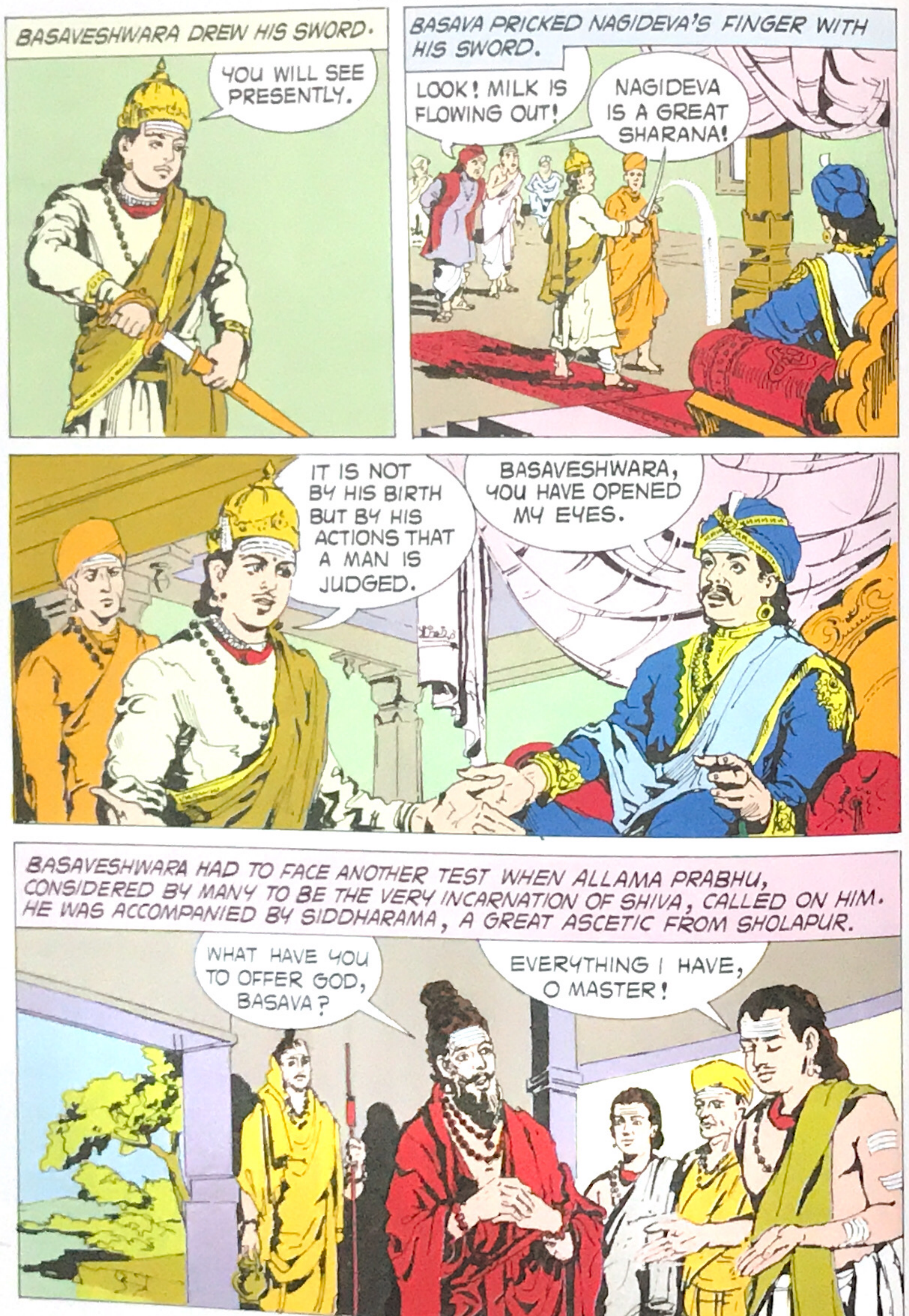

BY EATING WITH AN OUTCASTE BASAVESHWARA HAS SINNED AGAINST DHARMA. HE MUST BE PUNISHED.

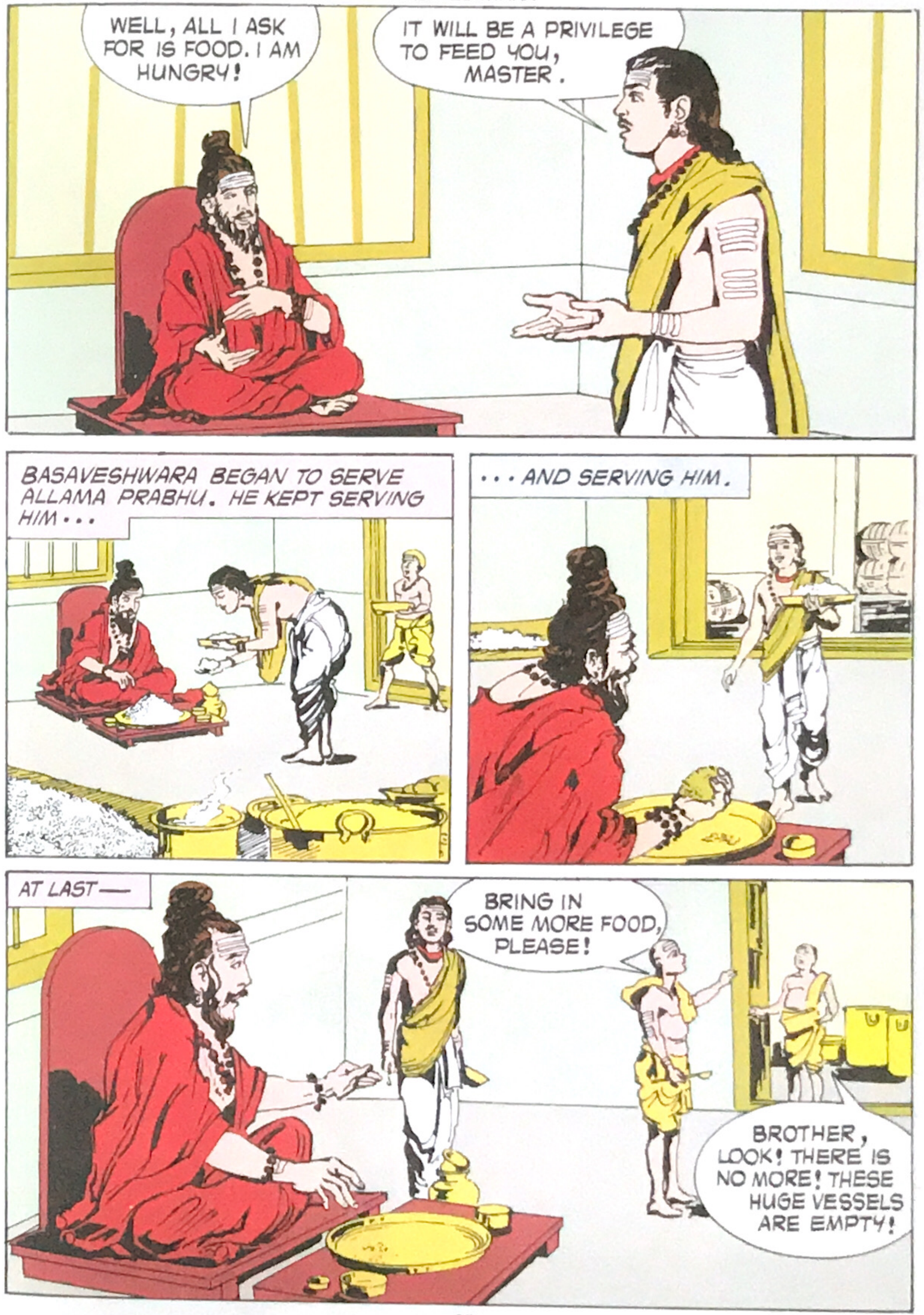
HEARING ABOUT THE COMPLAINT AGAINST BASAVESHWARA, NAGIDEVA APPEARED BEFORE THE KING.

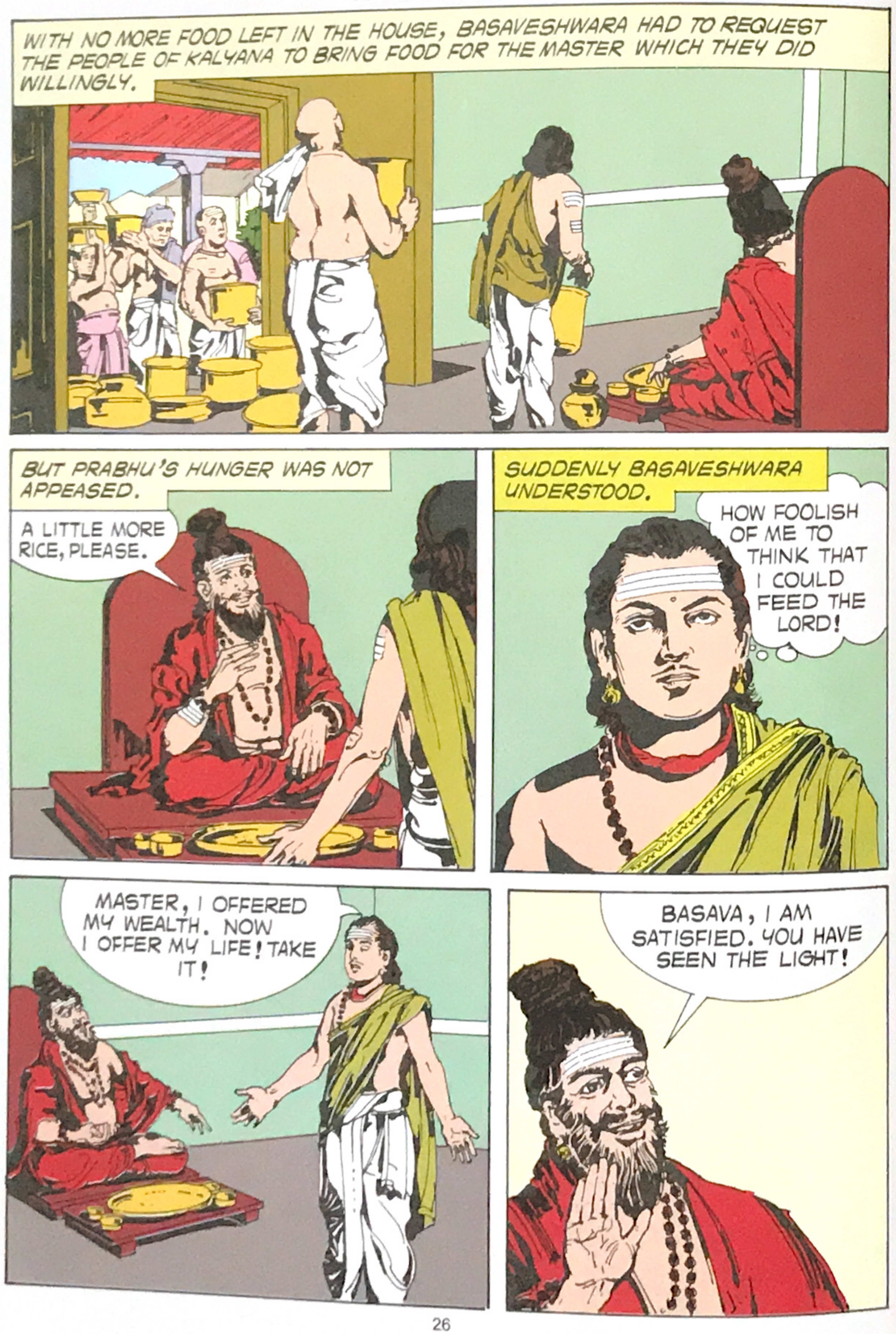

YOUR MAJESTY, PUNISH ME. I AM THE SINNER, NOT BASAVESHWARA.
YOUR MAJESTY, UNTOUCHABILITY IS AN EVIL CONCEPT. IT KEEPS WHOLE GROUPS OF PEOPLE IN POVERTY AND MISERY. A SHARANA, IN WHOM SHIVA HIMSELF RESIDES, CAN NEVER BE IMPURE.

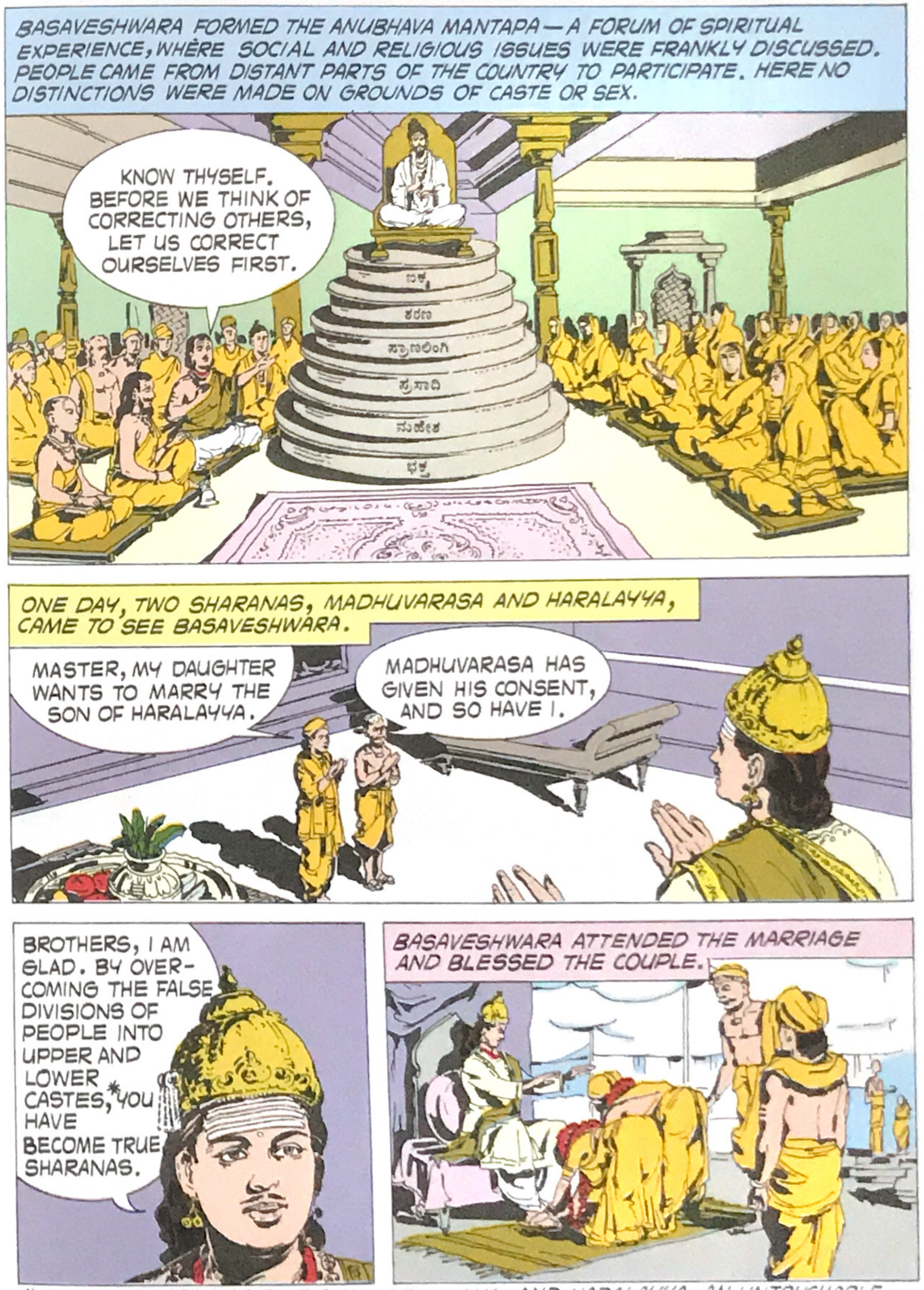
MANCHANA COULD NOT CONTROL HIS ANGER.


IS A SHARANA, THEN, SUPERIOR TO A BRAHMANA? DOES MILK INSTEAD OF BLOOD FLOW IN HIS VEINS?
ANSWER HIM, BASAVESHWARA.


BASAVESHWARA DREW HIS SWORD.
YOU WILL SEE PRESENTLY.
BASAVA PRICKED NAGIDEVA'S FINGER WITH HIS SWORD.
LOOK! MILK IS FLOWING OUT!
NAGIDEVA IS A GREAT SHARANA!
IT IS NOT BY HIS BIRTH BUT BY HIS ACTIONS THAT A MAN IS JUDGED.
BASAVESHWARA, YOU HAVE OPENED MY EYES.
BASAVESHWARA HAD TO FACE ANOTHER TEST WHEN ALLAMA PRABHU, CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE THE VERY INCARNATION OF SHIVA, CALLED ON HIM. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY SIDDHARAMA, A GREAT ASCETIC FROM SHOLAPUR.
WHAT HAVE YOU TO OFFER GOD, BASAVA?
EVERYTHING I HAVE, O MASTER!


WELL, ALL I ASK FOR IS FOOD. I AM HUNGRY!
IT WILL BE A PRIVILEGE TO FEED YOU, MASTER.
BASAVESHWARA BEGAN TO SERVE ALLAMA PRABHU. HE KEPT SERVING HIM...
... AND SERVING HIM.
AT LAST—
BRING IN SOME MORE FOOD, PLEASE!
BROTHER, LOOK! THERE IS NO MORE! THESE HUGE VESSELS ARE EMPTY!


WITH NO MORE FOOD LEFT IN THE HOUSE, BASAVESHWARA HAD TO REQUEST THE PEOPLE OF KALYANA TO BRING FOOD FOR THE MASTER WHICH THEY DID WILLINGLY.
BUT PRABHU'S HUNGER WAS NOT APPEASED.
A LITTLE MORE RICE, PLEASE.
SUDDENLY BASAVESHWARA UNDERSTOOD.
HOW FOOLISH OF ME TO THINK THAT I COULD FEED THE LORD!
MASTER, I OFFERED MY WEALTH. NOW I OFFER MY LIFE! TAKE IT!
BASAVA, I AM SATISFIED. YOU HAVE SEEN THE LIGHT!


BASAVESHWARA FORMED THE ANUBHAVA MANTAPA—A FORUM OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE, WHERE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES WERE FRANKLY DISCUSSED. PEOPLE CAME FROM DISTANT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY TO PARTICIPATE. HERE NO DISTINCTIONS WERE MADE ON GROUNDS OF CASTE OR SEX.
KNOW THYSELF. BEFORE WE THINK OF CORRECTING OTHERS, LET US CORRECT OURSELVES FIRST.
ಐಕ್ಯ
ಶರಣ
ಪ್ರಾಣಲಿಂಗಿ
ಪ್ರಸಾದಿ
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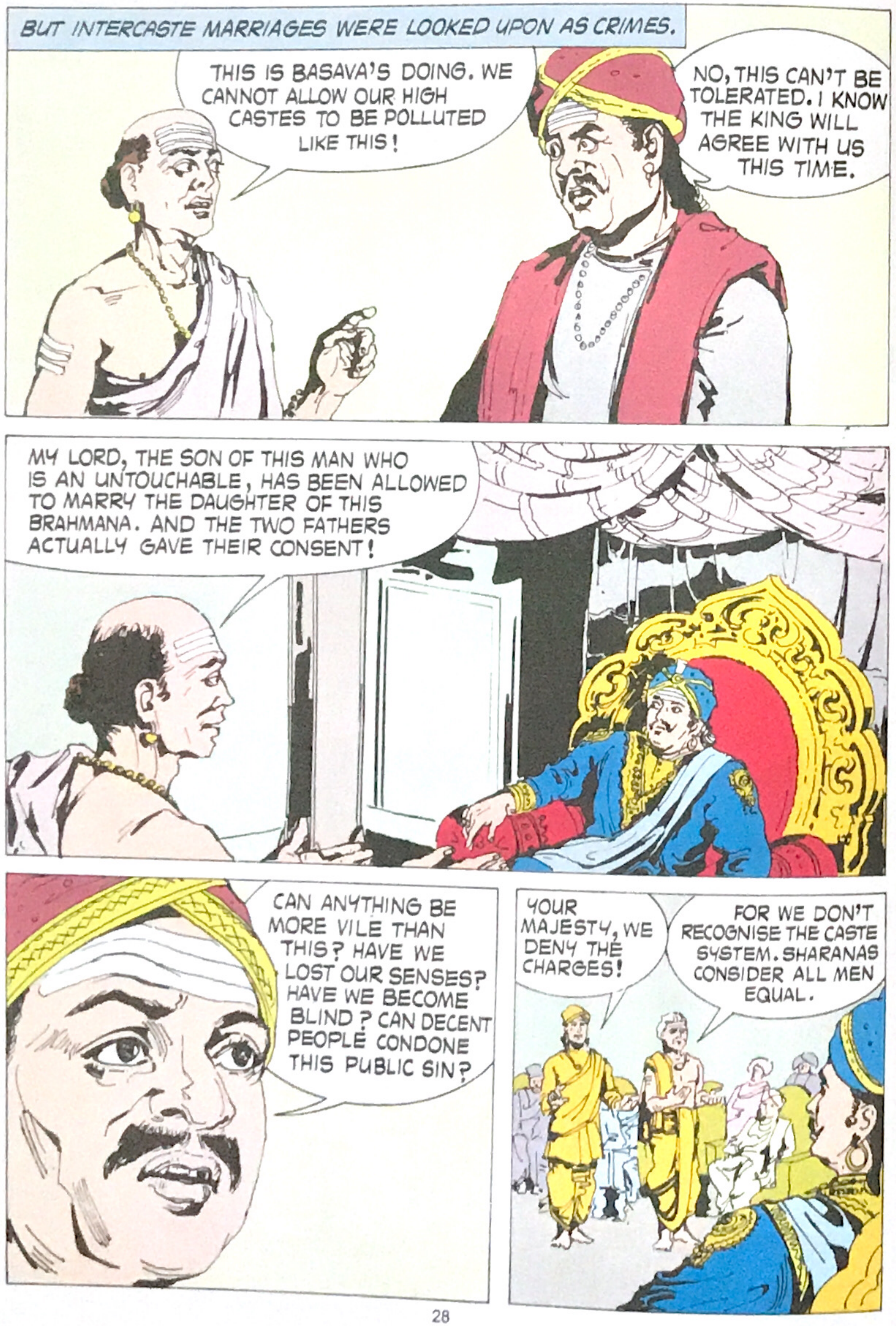
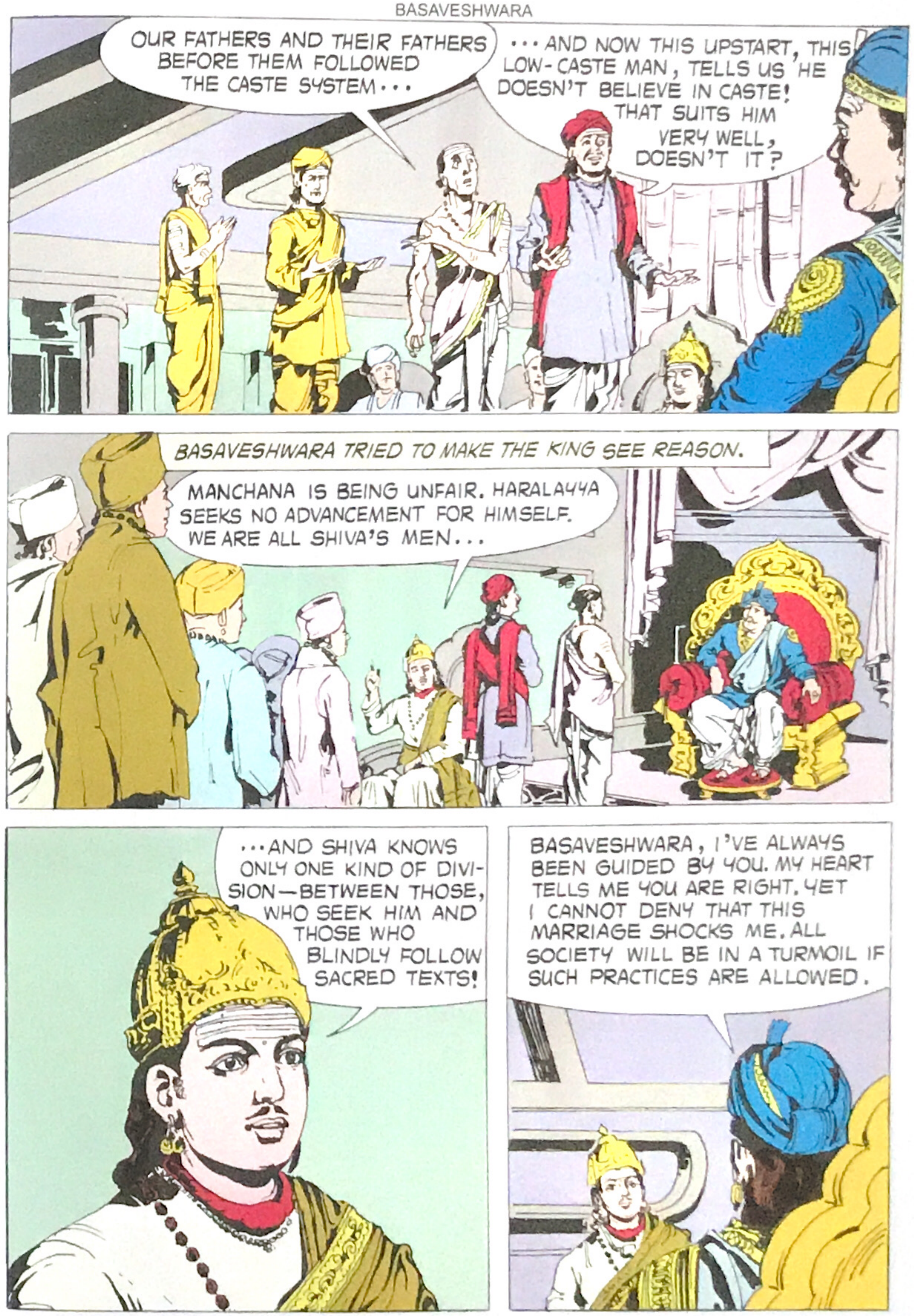
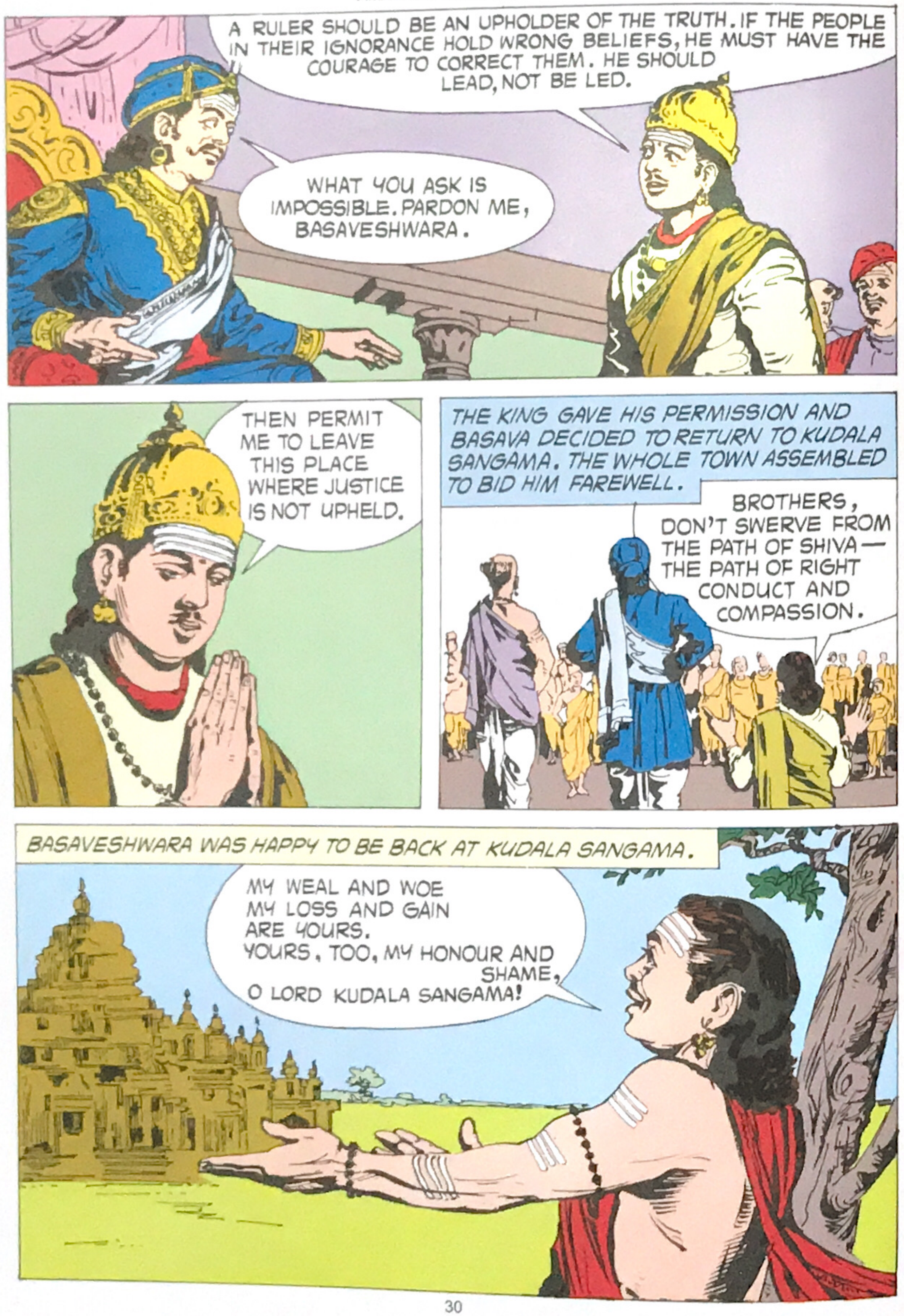
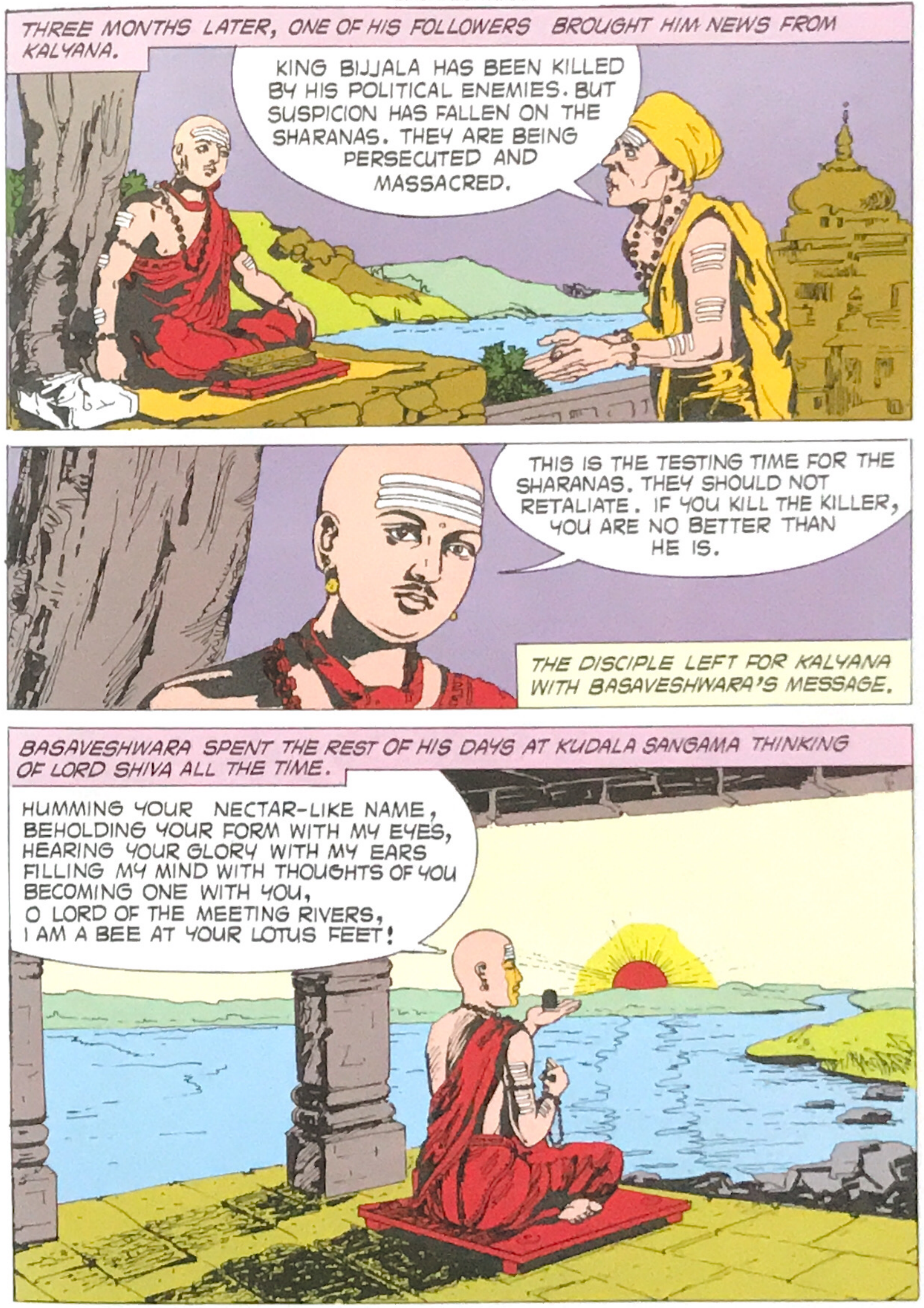
ಭಕ್ತ
ONE DAY, TWO SHARANAS, MADHUVARASA AND HARALAYYA, CAME TO SEE BASAVESHWARA.
MASTER, MY DAUGHTER WANTS TO MARRY THE SON OF HARALAYYA.
MADHUVARASA HAS GIVEN HIS CONSENT, AND SO HAVE I.
BROTHERS, I AM GLAD. BY OVERCOMING THE FALSE DIVISIONS OF PEOPLE INTO UPPER AND LOWER CASTES,* YOU HAVE BECOME TRUE SHARANAS.
BASAVESHWARA ATTENDED THE MARRIAGE AND BLESSED THE COUPLE.

*MADHUVARASA WAS BY BIRTH A BRAHMANA, AND HARALAYYA, AN UNTOUCHABLE


BUT INTERCASTE MARRIAGES WERE LOOKED UPON AS CRIMES.
THIS IS BASAVA'S DOING. WE CANNOT ALLOW OUR HIGH CASTES TO BE POLLUTED LIKE THIS!
NO, THIS CAN'T BE TOLERATED. I KNOW THE KING WILL AGREE WITH US THIS TIME.
MY LORD, THE SON OF THIS MAN WHO IS AN UNTOUCHABLE, HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO MARRY THE DAUGHTER OF THIS BRAHMANA. AND THE TWO FATHERS ACTUALLY GAVE THEIR CONSENT!
CAN ANYTHING BE MORE VILE THAN THIS? HAVE WE LOST OUR SENSES? HAVE WE BECOME BLIND? CAN DECENT PEOPLE CONDONE THIS PUBLIC SIN?
YOUR MAJESTY, WE DENY THE CHARGES!
FOR WE DON'T RECOGNISE THE CASTE SYSTEM. SHARANAS CONSIDER ALL MEN EQUAL.


OUR FATHERS AND THEIR FATHERS BEFORE THEM FOLLOWED THE CASTE SYSTEM...
...AND NOW THIS UPSTART, THIS LOW-CASTE MAN, TELLS US HE DOESN'T BELIEVE IN CASTE! THAT SUITS HIM VERY WELL, DOESN'T IT?
BASAVESHWARA TRIED TO MAKE THE KING SEE REASON.
MANCHANA IS BEING UNFAIR. HARALAYYA SEEKS NO ADVANCEMENT FOR HIMSELF. WE ARE ALL SHIVA'S MEN...
...AND SHIVA KNOWS ONLY ONE KIND OF DIVISION—BETWEEN THOSE, WHO SEEK HIM AND THOSE WHO BLINDLY FOLLOW SACRED TEXTS!
BASAVESHWARA, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN GUIDED BY YOU. MY HEART TELLS ME YOU ARE RIGHT. YET I CANNOT DENY THAT THIS MARRIAGE SHOCKS ME. ALL SOCIETY WILL BE IN A TURMOIL IF SUCH PRACTICES ARE ALLOWED.


A RULER SHOULD BE AN UPHOLDER OF THE TRUTH. IF THE PEOPLE IN THEIR IGNORANCE HOLD WRONG BELIEFS, HE MUST HAVE THE COURAGE TO CORRECT THEM. HE SHOULD LEAD, NOT BE LED.
WHAT YOU ASK IS IMPOSSIBLE. PARDON ME, BASAVESHWARA.
THEN PERMIT ME TO LEAVE THIS PLACE WHERE JUSTICE IS NOT UPHELD.
THE KING GAVE HIS PERMISSION AND BASAVA DECIDED TO RETURN TO KUDALA SANGAMA. THE WHOLE TOWN ASSEMBLED TO BID HIM FAREWELL.
BROTHERS, DON'T SWERVE FROM THE PATH OF SHIVA — THE PATH OF RIGHT CONDUCT AND COMPASSION.
BASAVESHWARA WAS HAPPY TO BE BACK AT KUDALA SANGAMA.
MY WEAL AND WOE MY LOSS AND GAIN ARE YOURS. YOURS, TOO, MY HONOUR AND SHAME, O LORD KUDALA SANGAMA!


THREE MONTHS LATER, ONE OF HIS FOLLOWERS BROUGHT HIM NEWS FROM KALYANA.
KING BIJJALA HAS BEEN KILLED BY HIS POLITICAL ENEMIES. BUT SUSPICION HAS FALLEN ON THE SHARANAS. THEY ARE BEING PERSECUTED AND MASSACRED.
THIS IS THE TESTING TIME FOR THE SHARANAS. THEY SHOULD NOT RETALIATE. IF YOU KILL THE KILLER, YOU ARE NO BETTER THAN HE IS.
THE DISCIPLE LEFT FOR KALYANA WITH BASAVESHWARA'S MESSAGE.
BASAVESHWARA SPENT THE REST OF HIS DAYS AT KUDALA SANGAMA THINKING OF LORD SHIVA ALL THE TIME.
HUMMING YOUR NECTAR-LIKE NAME, BEHOLDING YOUR FORM WITH MY EYES, HEARING YOUR GLORY WITH MY EARS FILLING MY MIND WITH THOUGHTS OF YOU BECOMING ONE WITH YOU, O LORD OF THE MEETING RIVERS, I AM A BEE AT YOUR LOTUS FEET!